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Xbox FIRST

Like bloodthirsty predators, we've ripped our carnivorous gnashers into *Turok Evolution* before anyone else did. Let them eat offal!

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Only the world first shots of the most eagerly awaited game ever.

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Become a Mech, then Assault everyone that fails to show you the respect you deserve.

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Some evil villains have set you up for a crime you didn't commit. Kill them all.

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All the dinosaur evolving you could ever wish for. See here for the world's first exclusive review—it bites.

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A Forceful first look at the *Star Wars* game that should make us forget all about *Obi-Wan*.

22 **SEGA GT 2002**
A huge four-page hands-on preview of the glam racer everyone's talking about.

50 **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM**
Like squad-based shooters which mix action with tactics? Then lap this up. It's top.

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48 **AGGRESSIVE INLINE**
Up for another grinder? Yet another attempt to topple *Tony Hawk's* from the top of the extreme sports tree—and it does a pretty fine job.

54 **BRUCE LEE QUEST OF THE DRAGON**
Miserable beat-'em-up that caused many a tear. Let's hope it sells like ice-cream in the middle of winter.

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AGGRESSIVE INLINE 48

TURN OVER FOR MORE FEATURES...

"WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GET *HALO 2* SCREENSHOTS!?" Become a writer with our Post Apocalyptic letterage.

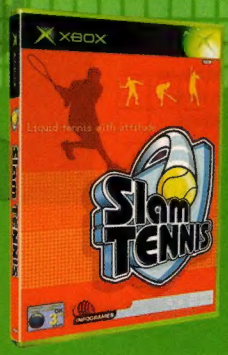
XBOX

INFOGRAMES

HAVE YOU GOT THE BALLS?

Slam Tennis goes where no tennis game has gone before – this is liquid tennis with attitude. A game that recreates then amplifies the excitement, atmosphere and challenge of modern professional tennis. In Slam Tennis overcoming your opponent is only part of the challenge.

Featuring: Kafelnikov, Moya, Henman, Norman, Ferrero, Clement, Vinciguerra. Each with their own style of play, strengths, weaknesses and favoured shot.



Slam Tennis

Liquid tennis with attitude

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extras

WIN! SURROUND SOUND SET-UP
Arouse your lugs with the grand Videologic Digitheatre DTS!

xbox insider

88 **ADVENTURES IN CYBERSPACE**
Xbox Live is about to open a broadband vortex to the world of cyberspace and online gaming. Yaroo!

98 **POST APOCALYPSE**
A penny for your thoughts. Okay, okay. A year's free subscription and a game for the best offering.

100 **BURNING QUESTIONS**
It's like the Xbox mecca. Those that reach these pages will leave fulfiled and enlightened.

102 **JOIN XGAMER POSSE**
XGamer made easy. One simple action is all that's required, then your favourite X-organ will walk itself to your letterbox and ring the doorbell.

104 **STEEL BATTALION**
Atsushi Inaba drops into **XGamer** towers to have a natter talk about big mean mechs.

106 **THE LOWDOWN ON...**
That joystick of monstrous size and complexity we'll all need to play the above mech master-blaster.

108 **GIZZA JOB**
In game development, some people are paid to do research to make games better. Sounds like a party.

109 **THE MAKING OF...**
Project Ego takes another giant leap for mankind.

110 **COMPETITION**
In true **XGamer** style, a huge box full of tooth-loosening goodies awaits—sound equipment that'll take your gaming to new levels of aceness.

regulars

62 **HIT LIST**
Every Xbox game reviewed and rated, from the dirty girties to the whirly pearlies.

68 **STAYING ALIVE**
It's tips galore this month. Good for your gaming progress, but bad for your soul. Shame on you.

112 **NEXT MONTH**
We're working on it already, and it looks absolutely superb. No, even better than that.

114 **BADVERT**
Advanced Cable X, as promoted by Christopher "You will taste man flesh!" Lee and Edward "I married Michelle Dotrice" Woodward.

PRISONER OF WAR TIPS BREAKOUT 72

feature

88 NET GAMING
Thousands of PC gamers already play online every day. Soon, with Xbox Live, we'll be diving into the international cookie pot, too. Find out what online gaming really means for us all as gameplayers

≫ online experience...

DEATHMATCH
Fragging mates in murderously addictive action games.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY
A whole new community awaits—but will we all fit in?

PERSISTENT WORLDS
Some worlds are always 'on', so we can pop in when it suits us.

DO NOT MISS...

HALO 2 More on the Master Chief's next adventure. We can barely breathe in antipittiapesh... Oh, sod it **Page 12**

GREAT ESCAPE *Prisoner Of War* tips **Page 72**

THE CONSOLE WAR'S HOTTING UP FOR THE NEXT BIG BATTLE. CONFLICT: DESERT STORM IS SUPERB SQUAD-BASED ACTION THAT'LL LEAVE YOU GASPING FOR BREATH...

At last, the game drought is ending. We're reached the edge of the desert—and dunked our laughing gear into the thirst-quenching titles we've all been choking for.

ABOUT TIME! Great games, great times. The gaming situation's gone from bad to good. Top.

editor's letter

"It's raining games—Hallelujah!" As the Weather Girls might have said, if only things had turned out a bit differently. The recent dry spell has been brought to a storming close with a deluge of top titles that have finally made us moist. In scenes unknown since launch day, four excellent games are about to arrive at once—*Commandos 2, Aggressive Inline, Conflict: Desert Storm* and *Turok*, with plenty more to follow. We've just endured the cruellest summer. Tawdry unworthies like *Hunter* and *Enclave* have stuck their noses into the upper reaches of the charts. Basically we've been desperate. But from here on in, we should be treated to games that really show what Xbox is all about. The 'what makes a great game' debate is one that rages endlessly at **XGamer**. I personally tend to be drawn to titles that create the illusion of a complete world. Places filled with so much incidental detail that they dupe the brain into thinking anything could be going on around the next corner—from a bloody gun battle to the teddy bears' picnic. *Halo* is a game like this. And it's why we keep banging on about *Steel Battalion* (page 104-107). This game is unlikely to be a commerical success, but it brings to Xbox the grandest vision of an alternative game reality we've ever seen. Be inspired.

Mark Donald Editor
xgamer@futurenet.co.uk

select

12 **HALO 2**
We've actually broken into Bungie and ransacked the place for everything... Oh no, the cops are here. Leg it!

15 **DOOM III**
The scariest game since Russian roulette with five bullets is coming to Xbox. That's a ruddy good thing.

88 **ADVENTURES IN CYBERSPACE**
A probing feature that unravels the mysteries of online gaming—soon made possible by Xbox Live.

TURN OVER AND LET THE GAMES BEGIN...

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SAND-BLASTED! ACTUAL IN-GAME SCREENSHOT!

HIT AND RUN The game's littered with targets needing knocked to rubble. Just make sure you get the hell out of there before reinforcements arrive.

SPLASH DAMAGE Explosions are often a bit like real war. They blow your cover not to mention your brain case.

PEDIGREE CHUM You're not in this on your Jack Jones. A loyal squad of controllable-AI comrades will stand, fight and die by your side. Good chaps.

GAME_CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

HITTING THE BEACH WITH YOUR MATES

SCENE One of Saddam's radar towers needs to be blown to kingdom come.
WEAPON Plastic explosives that will burn your fingers if you get too close.
FEELING "Shut up with all that noise! I'm trying to get some sleep, damn it!"

MORE? GIMMIE 50 FOR THE FOUR PAGE BANG

first contact

A sly tickle with the stars of the future

BATTLEFIELD 1942

- Fight the war on multiple fronts
- Fly a plane, drive a tank or command a sub
- Switch sides at will—Italian style

Think you're tough enough to fight the biggest and bloodiest war in history? Well, here's your chance to prove it. The game that's got PC audiences the world over shooting the sky with broom handles, saucepans on noggin, and talking in mockerney-cockerney, is all set to invade the Xbox beach like a thousand ships firing a thousand guns.

Battlefield 1942 lovingly recreates WW2 battles from both the European and Pacific campaigns and should come in damn handy while *Medal Of Honour* remains bogged down in the Xbox development trenches. What's more, it's going to heroic lengths to satisfy our taste for action. You get to do everything from take charge of a lone soldier in a first-person-shooter romp to firing gigantic shells from a battleship's enormous barrels.

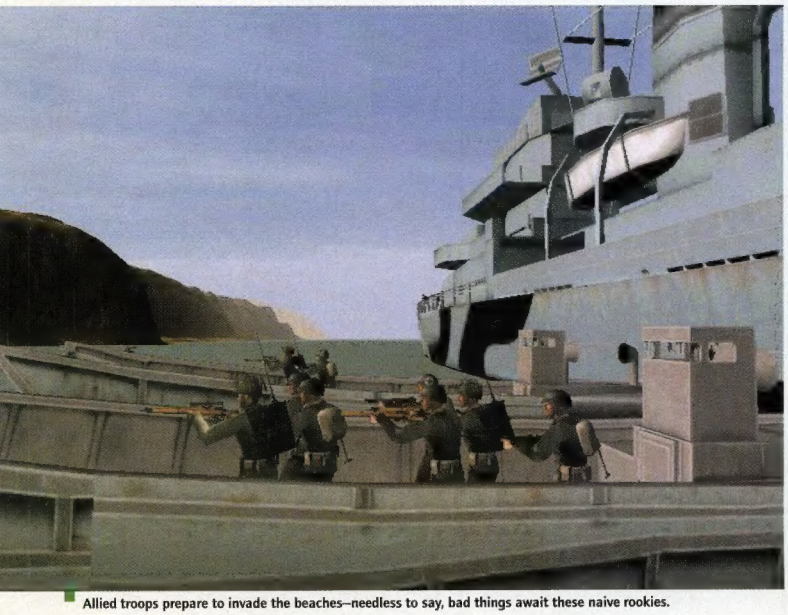
COME ON, CHAPS! IT'LL BE A WHEEZE...

Swear allegiance to one of five nations and then fight for cause, country and carnage. Be a British Marine invading the beaches of Normandy. Or an American behind the wheel of a Willy's jeep careering through France. Alternatively, take the Nazi reins of a super-hard Tiger Tank, plunge your Japanese Kamikaze Zero into the side of the USS Enterprise or get nasty with a Russian mobile rocket, the fabulous Katyusha.

The AI is being touted as the most advanced yet, but, best of all, the PC version was initially designed as a multiplayer game, making full use of broadband. It therefore appears more than likely that *1942* will go live, so soon you'll actually be able to kill German players for real. And if that isn't the epitome of tasteless fun, we don't know what is.

CLASS WAR!
You can fight the war from loads of different trades. Be a Medic, Scout, Engineer or even an anti-tank specialist. Great, for when you get bored of your job.

Developer Digital Illusions
Publisher EA
Release Winter
Genre First-person shooter
For more... 0870 243 2435 www.ea.com



Allied troops prepare to invade the beaches—needless to say, bad things await these naive rookies.

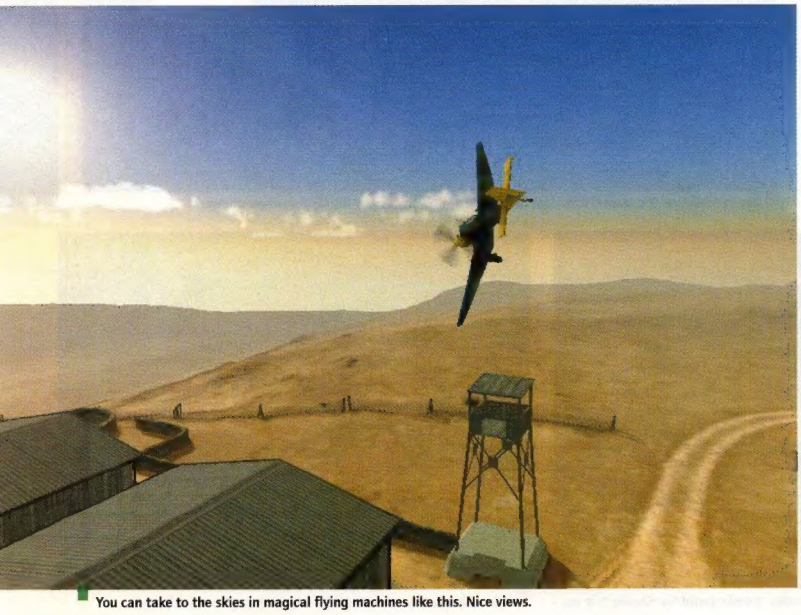
As birds continue to dump on our soldiers, an exasperated target seeks revenge with a bazooka.

TRACK RECORD

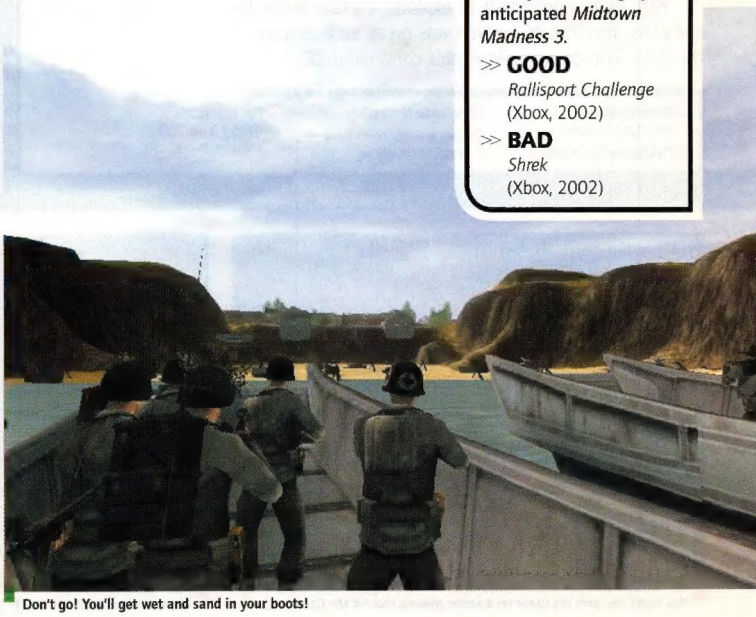
Digital Illusions is the Swedish outfit responsible for the corking *Rallisport Challenge*—and the state that was *Shrek* (thankfully, its Canadian arm was responsible for that green bogey). The developer is now hard at the keys on the highly anticipated *Midtown Madness 3*.

>> **GOOD**
Rallisport Challenge
(Xbox, 2002)

>> **BAD**
Shrek
(Xbox, 2002)



You can take to the skies in magical flying machines like this. Nice views.



Don't go! You'll get wet and sand in your boots!

first contact

JEDI KNIGHT II

- Jedi swings killer raving glo-stick
- Multiperson action in a mad galaxy
- Use mind tricks to get free drinks

Fancy being a lightsabre-swinging Jedi without having to play the hyper-deceased Obi-Wan? Brought over from the PC, *Star Wars Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast* follows on from PC hit *Jedi Knight*. You *are* former Jedi Kyle Katarn. And you *are* thrown into a world of first-person shooting and third-person lightsword-play.

In the glorious FPS sections of the game, you get to obliterate swathes of Stormtroopers with enhanced AI. Walk into a chamber with a dozen and they'll scream, "Come on then!" But slay one in a room of two and the survivor scarpers screaming, "Mummy!" Other assailants include Dark Jedis, who range from weak Reborns to rock-hard Shadowtroopers who fight to the death.

To combat these fellas, you'll have a wide range of laser shooters at your disposal, plus the athletic prowess of a spring-tailed flea—you can bounce off walls (*Mario*) and even run up vertiginous surfaces (*Matrix*). You're also backed by frendlies who help out in fire-fights and give advice (combat tips, directions).

The game takes a turn midway when Luke Skywalker turns up for a chin-wag. His words are so wise, Kyle re-embraces the Force, gets handy with a lightsabre (and an all new third-person perspective) and regains his Force powers (among them, levitation, lightning bolts and mind control).

With eight huge levels to explore, it'll take yonks to complete, too. The PC version was great, so let's hope the Dark Side doesn't engulf this conversion.

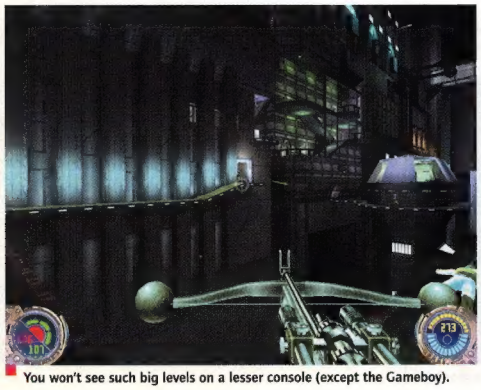
FORCE
Your powers of the Force increase as you progress. At the start, you'll only be able to charm a snake, but by the end you'll be able to obliterate mountains at a glance.

Developer Vicarious Visions
Publisher LucasArts
Release November
Genre First/third-person-shooter/duelling
For more... 01753 756 100 www.lucasarts.com

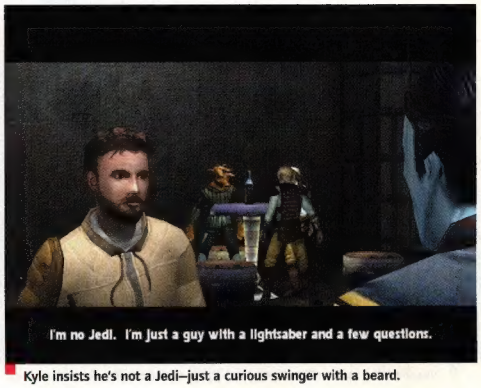
A single blue ray in a sea of red. Like a Man City fan floating in a river of blood.

Clunky blasters are still useful for mincing the Empire's bad folk.

Any minute now, the strobes and laser tunnel will switch on. It's like the third summer of love.


You won't see such big levels on a lesser console (except the Gameboy).

Thermal detonators are trendy grenades. Bloody useful for blowing folk up.



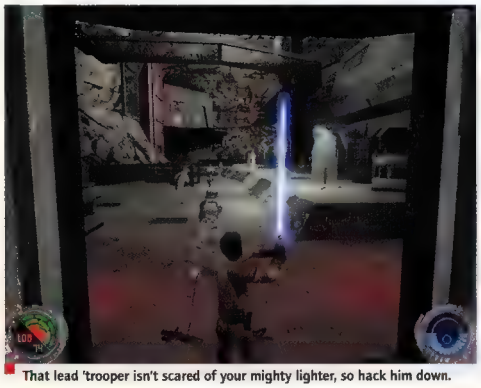
Kyle insists he's not a Jedi—just a curious swinger with a beard.

TRACK RECORD

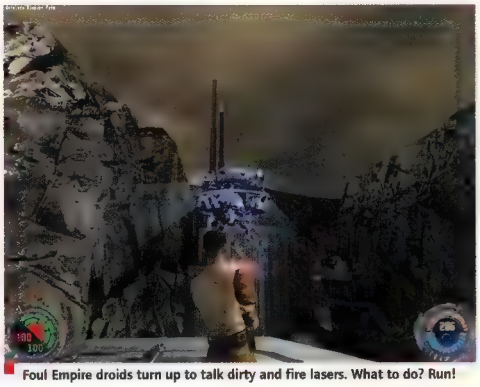
Raven was behind the mighty PC version, but hearts stopped when we discovered that this conversion's being handled by Vicarious Visions—a hand-held conversion house with zero next-gen produce. Terrible things will happen if they mess up...

>> **GOOD**
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 (2002 GBA)
Spider-Man 2: Enter Electro (2001 PS1)

>> **AVERAGE**
Crash Bandicoot: The Huge Adventure (2002 GBA)
Frogger: The Great Quest (2002 GBA)


That lead 'trooper isn't scared of your mighty lighter, so hack him down.

There's no discrimination in Empire recruitment. Amputees can apply, too.


Foul Empire droids turn up to talk dirty and fire lasers. What to do? Run!

XGAMER's news soldiers storm the fact beaches

trace halo gorgeous

HALO 2

"Pressure too intense. Got to tell someone." Bungie burst with first pics and info on the ultimate sequel.

"We're planning something special for multiplayer in *Halo 2*.

"Imagine pitched battles between humans and the Covenant, massive vehicle and infantry engagements. Now imagine that every combatant is an actual person playing over Xbox Live." With these words, Jamie Griesemer–*Halo 2*'s lead designer–gave us our first official insight into the sequel that haunts every Xbox gamer's dreams. While a dramatic video trailer gave us our first tantalising glimpse (see right). A completely new single-player adventure is promised, while Ed Fries (VP of Xbox games content) described the multiplayer experience as "squad based, team combat." *Halo 2* will play a starring role in the new online arenas of Xbox Live, featuring voice-chat and what Bungie describe as "extensive community support," which we take to mean plenty of extra downloads and multiplayer tournaments.

Fries also revealed, "You're going to have more than twice as many user-controllable vehicles as you had in the first game. You're going to see the Covenant again but there will be also be new enemies and new allies." So that means we're in for at least nine vehicles then. Bungie has also confirmed new weapons and baddies on top of the original range and reckon it's completely rewriting the graphics engine. X

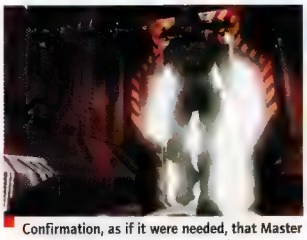
Who Bungie/Microsoft

When Christmas 2003 (Nooooo!)

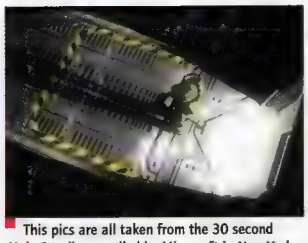
briefs

XBOX LIVE

We've uncovered some fresh Xbox Live details. It will launch globally this year in the following countries: the US, Japan, Canada, Germany, France and the UK. If you don't want to risk online credit card transactions then you will be able to use pre-paid cards instead. After the first year, it looks like subscriptions can be renewed on a monthly, 3, 6 and 12 month basis. Microsoft has also confirmed there will be a keyboard option available for Xbox Live. Though it's not compulsory.



Confirmation, as if it were needed, that Master Chief will play the lead role once again.



This pics are all taken from the 30 second *Halo 2* trailer unveiled by Microsoft in New York.

Microsoft say that everything we see here has been drawn using the in-game graphics engine.

WIRED> Two sequels to *Conflict: Desert Storm* on the way. *Desert Sabre* continues the Gulf scrap, and the other title features US aggro in 'Nam

WIRED> Good chance of *Sonic* on multiple next-gen consoles say Sega sources

XGAMER xclusive

XGamer scoops the world's first official *Halo 2* shots. Smashing.

select

14 **TIGER WOODS PGA 2003**
Tiger's back to stick his hand in your pocket and indulge himself with your green.

14 **IT'S THE LAW**
Football games take a right royal kicking.

14 **FIFA FOOTBALL 2003**
We couldn't believe it when they said there'd be another.

15 **AGENT X**
He's the agent with more front than a cheeky hippo and bigger bugs than a Moss Side squat.

15 **DOOM III**
It's been hundreds of years since *Doom II* graced the PC, and now the sequel's coming our way. Yes! Praise the lord!

16 **ARTISTIC GAME LICENCE**
John McCrinck, the most ridiculous man in town with the even more ridiculous hat tries to rip-off *Mario* and *Harry Potter*.

16 **DRIVER 3**
The PSone series is being ramped up to the Xbox. the graphics will be a bit better, though, we reckon.

16 **LORD OF THE RINGS**
EA's game, based on the films. Good news for lords and rings alike.

17 **CHARTS**
Halo's still at the top. It probably will be until the next one comes out. That's marvellous selling that is.

17 **SERIOUS SAM**
The fattest Sam since Sam Fox is coming to the box with more seriousness than a bunch of feminists marching down the road waving "men are crap" placards.

17 **BRUCE LEE COMPETITION**
The only thing ever that's harder than Bruce Lee is this compo. If you can turn a Bruce Lee battle cry into 20 letters of text you'll might win an Xbox with lots of Bruce Lee related runners up prizes.

18 NEW GAMES REVEALED

MC has buffed up his armour a bit since we saw him last. And got a sight for his rifle.

trace oh my eyes!

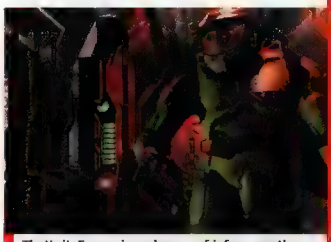
HALO 2 VIDEO

Like so many good things in life, it's all over after 30 seconds.

So what does the *Halo 2* video give away? Only that the Covenant war fleet is parked in Earth orbit and giving the ol' mother planet a right shoeing. The sequence opens with Master Chief tooling up in the bowels of a spaceship. He prowls purposefully through shadowy corridors—showing off his new lighting effects—while frantic comms chatter reveals Earth is under attack. With Terran defences scattered, Cortana comes on line and tells the panicking military to expect reinforcements. Staring out a ship porthole, we see Earth sprouting mushroom clouds like a fungal outbreak. Then a tear-drop shaped, silver, Covenant warship hoves into view. First one, then another. MC heads to the flight deck, but there's no transport available. Our hero braces himself against a wall and opens the docking bay doors. Then, with Cortana wittering warnings, he leaps out of the ship; freefalling towards a Covenant cruiser in an insane boarding action. Light's up. It ends there—a teasing 30 seconds long. The movie plays in the same vein as *Halo's* original cut-scenes, though Microsoft claim it has been created using *Halo 2's* in-game graphics. Bungie say "We are using a completely rewritten graphics engine which allows our artists to work in previously unimaginable complexity and detail. Anyone who thinks the original *Halo* stretched the Xbox's graphical abilities to the limit is mistaken. There are gorgeous new realms to be explored, and *Halo 2* will take you there." We hope so. That trailer should be on bungie.net by the time you read this.

Where www.bungie.net
When Now

Emergency only? Heh. The only fitting exit for the Master Chief.



That's it. Every pic and scrap of info currently in existence for *Halo 2*, in one tidy scoop.

briefs

EMULATION
Hackers have turned Xbox into an arcade cabinet. Xbox compatible emulators have been created for MAME, SNES, Megadrive, NES, PC GBA and more. They'll only work with a chipped Xbox and Bill's lawyers are currently chasing the culprits around the Internet.

trace screeeech

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

Bizarre retread familiar ground.

Microsoft also flashed us a cheeky little glimpse of *Project Gotham Racing 2*. Again we were treated to a snatch of video footage and taunted with some early gameplay details. Bizarre Creations is at the development wheel once more, and naturally it's chucking in fresh cars (more than 50) including Porsches and the new Enzo Ferrari model. New cities? Yep. We'll be off to Hong Kong and, in an eye-brow raising manoeuvre, Edinburgh—which could prove an inspired choice. Just imagine the twisted, cobbled streets tickling the force-feedback and the joys of a lap around Arthur's Seat. The Kudos scoring system is being overhauled (no specifics yet though); there'll be a four player System Link option and heavy Xbox Live support, again in time for Christmas 2003. On the subject of Xbox Live, Microsoft reckon it's still on course for a global launch of its online, multiplayer experience in 2002. European dates and prices will be announced on September 24.

Possibly not an innovative new car cam, but definitely the first ever shot of *Project Gotham 2*.

> Breaking news on *Deus Ex 2*: a stealth microphone lets you earwig on conversations and you can buy illegal biomods with extra power

WIRED> New Archbishop of Canterbury slams videogames as corrupters of youth...

briefs

AREA 51
The famous US air base—no star hotel for alien visitors—provides the setting for this arcade-adventure with beat-'em-up leanings. Take on one of three characters and try to unlock the mysteries within. It's due out from Midway next year.

trace catman

TIGER WOODS PGA 2003

Grip your wood, prepare your balls and head towards a hole for a winning birdie. Plus-fours not an option.

If the lesbian strippers and fat bikers of *Outlaw Golf* didn't suit your refined tastebuds, news of EA's more serious golf sim most certainly will. Tiger Woods may have the personality of a sandcastle, but when it comes to putting coins for EA, he's a top swinger with enough clout to knock a seal pup for six.

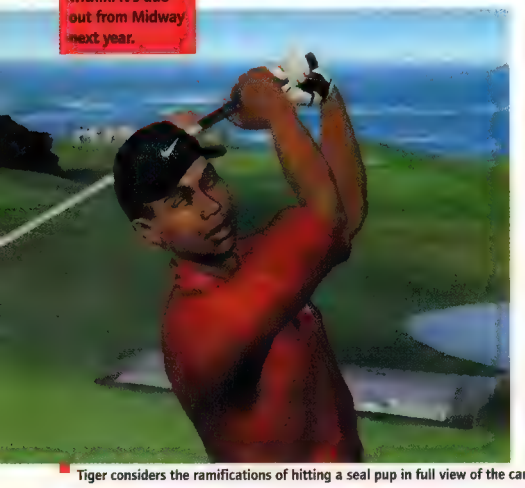
In *Tiger Woods PGA 2003*, you'll be able to don the horrific clobber of 17 real golfers (Tiger and 16 nobodies, natch) and go for a jaunty ramble around 14 different courses, including the very nice Torrey Pines, Poppy Hills, Spyglass Hill and Scottsdale. Be prepared for some pretty views as the ball plops into the bunker (and some not-so-pretty profanities as you repeatedly fail to chip the beggar out afterwards).

The series' unique swing system will remain in place, of course. Simply hold down on the thumbstick to bring the club back, then jab forward to crack the ball.

Fresh modes should add a little new spice to proceedings too. Skill Zone offers the rare chance to fill your pants with balls and indulge in mini-game fun, while the create-a-course feature will have sadistic designers stroking their irons with glee.

We'll let you know if it's a bogie or a birdie soon enough.

Who Electronic Arts
When Winter


Tiger considers the ramifications of hitting a seal pup in full view of the cameras...

XCOPS DO NOT CROSS XCOPS DO NOT CROSS XCOPS DO NOT CROSS XCOPS

IT'S THE LAW!

All football games must commit the following deadly sins...

LAW 1 **In the convoluted world of name and likenesses licences, you lose the rights to certain player names, resulting in ridiculous comedy player handles like David Weeman or David Peckham.**

LAW 2 **Ensure the commentary is as soulless as the robot voice on Directory Enquiries. It'll be entirely constructed out of generic words and syllables, so the final sentence sounds like it's been passed around several people all saying a word each.**

LAW 3 **Whenever the player is prompted to take a free or corner kick, a big daft arrow will appear, showing exactly where the ball will land, taking all the skill and judgement out of the process.**

CODE OF CONDUCT

- You must make at least one a year, and if there's any big event within that time-frame (World Cup, etc), bang out another for happy banking.
- You must squeeze at least four instalments from each game engine. After that, draft a programmer in for ten minutes to make a tiny change to the inertia—then you can call it a new engine.
- Every now and then, get a celebrity endorsement from a highly liked man of balls. Have a marketing picture of him looking at a telly, joypad in one hand, other hand in the air, mouth gaped open, like he's not just looking at a blank screen thinking "Cheese!"

DO NOT CROSS XCOPS DO NOT CROSS XCOPS DO NOT CROSS XCOPS DO NOT CROSS

Players now boast their own idiosyncratic dribbling techniques. Lovely.

trace first touch

FIFA FOOTBALL 2003

FIFA punts a belter at the box. Mind your disc tray doesn't snap when this one comes through the tunnel.

It's *FIFA* time again, so you'll no doubt be pleased to hear the slightly familiar-sounding news that EA is raising the stakes with the latest version, a mere six months after the last. EA's proud claim is that *FIFA 2003* "lives by the rules of the real sport". Which apparently means the designers are implementing a raft of new features.

Fog off, the game engine has been remodelled to make ball control more important. In gameplay terms, the ball is now an entity in its own right. No longer does it simply stick to your player's feet until he's intercepted or chooses to pass to a team-mate on the wing. Not a bit of it. Now when you dribble, the player's direction shifts to reflect the ball's movement—because he actually has to slow the thing down and get around it first, whereas before he could simply turn on the spot. While factoring in this extra realism increases the risks of being tackled or fluffing it up, EA are hoping it'll provide another subtle level of realism—enabling players to show off their own dribbling style. Expect to see a few trademark moves from the stars too.

A stack of exciting new player animations makes the game look a whole lot fruitier, 'n' all. You get a real sense of mass and momentum when players are hacked ruthlessly to the ground, and the on-the-ball feints to fool opposing players look great. Better still, they actually work. But let's hope it takes more than a hard run and a curler from the corner of the box to plant one in the net, this time.

Who Electronic Arts
When November [insert year here]

The defender made a fatal error when his eye caught sight of a shiny sixpence in the grass.

Exciting new animations ensure *FIFA* enthusiasts won't be disappointed.

WIRED > Tony Hawk signs with Activision for another 13 years. Look forward to *Pro Skater 17* in 2015 > *Phantasy Star* downloads confirmed by Yuji Naka

agent X

Fingering the wheelie-bins of gamesville for the naked truth.

***Psssssst*! Do you have the dossier? You do? Good.** Now here's the gossip you wanted

First up: **Return To Castle Wolfenstein**. We all know it's coming to Xbox, but sources at Activision have indicated the game will be Xbox Live-enabled. Bring on the late-night frag-fests. And while we're talking Activision, work is now firmly underway on **Wreckless 2**, which is set to contain many of the new features (such as multiplayer modes) which will appear in the PS2 version.

Read the **Halo** novel yet? No? Well, bookworms rejoice—it's soon to see a UK release. And that's not all—there are several titles planned to tie in with other Xbox games. I'm hoping for a self-help book—*Abe's Guide: Crapulence On Cue*.

My Microsoft mole reported in yesterday—apparently, Bill's hairless boffins have experimented with PCs that play Xbox games. But plans for the Xbox chipped PC have been shelved for the time being. Mole assures me he'll prod the right people in an attempt to get the project re-activated. But if PC games are up your back-alley, then you'll be pleased to hear that the stunning RTS **Medieval: Total War** under consideration for Xbox release.

Closer to home, Manchester-based Blade Interactive is putting together a racer based on **Scalextric**. The game features absolutely stunning tracks, all of which are alterable in the powerful track editor. Check back next month for a full news story.

Finally, if you thought the games industry wasn't mad enough, work has actually begun on the sequel to the outrageously saucy (and as yet unfinished) **Dave Mirra XXX**. Jumping the gun? Or pumping the nun? Only time will tell. Agent XXX out.

When the screen went back, Lucy had mere seconds before being mauled by her blind date.

trace hells bells

status: exclusive First with the news that counts!

DOOM III

Thought *Doom III* was lost in the labyrinths of development hell? Looks like it may have found the gold key....

Get down the bookies. The boss man at id Software reckons we should take a punt on *Doom III*—their stunning first-person shooter—arriving on Xbox.

Speculation has been rampant that *Doom III* is possible on the black beauty, so we popped the question directly to id's CEO, Todd Hollenshead. Todd confirmed that Xbox should "run the game at full impact". When asked if id will convert the title, Todd tipped us the wink all Xbox gamers have been praying for: "We're going to focus on the PC first. But I would say that if there was a betting line on it, I would probably take it that we will." That's good enough for us. Especially when you consider John Carmack, co-owner of id, was consulted by Microsoft during the Xbox development process. What's more, id are currently overseeing the conversion to Xbox of their last shooter, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. The only snag is id are busy on the PC version of *Doom III*, which it aims to complete before any other considerations.

It'll be worth waiting for though. We've seen the game in action and it left us reeling. The incredible graphics provoked an irresistible reaction of shock and awe as gore-drenched dog-demons with a taste for man-tripe burst through walls and perform unspeakable acts of violence. Our kind of game.

Who id

When To be officially announced

Fully freaked up to scare the willies off any discerning gamer, id's *Doom III* is tipped for Xbox. The PC pics shown here are a tantalising taste of the stunning horror-show we can expect.

briefs

BEACH BALLS

Dead Or Alive Xtreme Volleyball originally started life as a model peepshow, code-named *Dead Or Alive Digital Venus 2002*. Apparently, it enabled users to move the CG *DOA* characters around the screen. It was too sad though, so Tecmo producer Tomonobu Itagaki beefed it up with the volleyball excuse. There were also plans for a swimming game but they've been shelved. For now.

WIRED> Plastic, roll-up TVs invented by Cambridge firm. Handy for Link-up play

briefs

TWEAKED THAT: Gallic developer 4X Studios is busily crafting an action RPG called *Times Of Trouble*. You play Zak, a young, well-oiled worker—sorry, a young oil well worker—determined to fight capitalism...

trace the third one

DRIVER 3

Tanner and Jones are driving to Xbox in a gangster-fuelled orgy of skids and shoot-outs.

The PS2 can stuff *Grand Theft Auto 3* up its jacksie as far as we're concerned. There's a new don coming to the world of gangster games—and it's distinctly *Driver* shaped. Yep, the third instalment in the famous series is heading our way, and judging from the greatness of the prequels (well, mostly great), it's one gangster adventure that's worth getting excited about well in advance. You'll be able to return to Miami and Rio, while new locations include the spectacular Istanbul and gorgeously Gallic Nice. Tanner and Jones will also return for more behind-the-wheel japes and pedestrian-mangling.

Infogrames has dished out next to nothing about the game's content (just the title at this stage), but we have discovered that the on-foot sections will be a lot more like those in *Grand Theft Auto 3*, rather than the atrocious effort that was coughed up in the PS1 prequel.

Developer Reflections has had more experience in the driving field than Nigel Mansell has had trimming amusingly old-fashioned moustaches. As well as the game's two precursors, it's also responsible for the birth of the *Destruction Derby* series, and the highly respectable PS2 game *Stunt Man*.

This could be a belter, so keep an eye on our First Contact section for more information when it arrives.

Who Infogrames
When 2003

The only glimpse of *Driver 3* so far, is this distinctly dodgy (not to mention very early) video footage. They're giving nothing away.

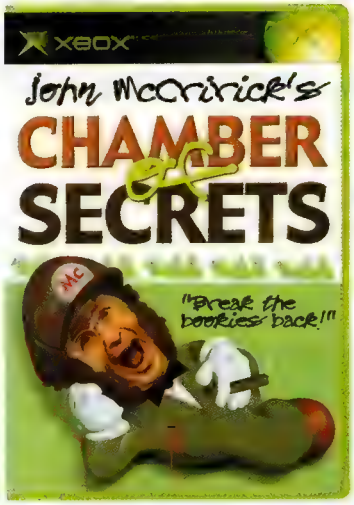
ARTISTIC GAME LICENCE

NO.6 John McCririck's CHAMBER OF SECRETS

The Pitch
Take the man of hats and horses on a platforming puzzle romp in a bid to become the top cock of the horse's stable.

The tagline
"Break the bookies back"

The game
You get under the mad hat of the Big Mac and go on the romp in a glorious *Mario 64* rip-off. The game kickstarts with you hussling quids at badly run cockfights and it's your job to get John where he is today—with more mint than an After Eight. Wander around the nation's biggest race tracks placing bets and serving dead certs to all and sundry. Impress TV producers to get a job talking nags on the telly. Ultra-hard end of levels baddies in the form of bookies brandishing massive versions of those little pens with poisonous tips. Back prize-winning horses and gain cash like a man with a gun in a bank.



Secrets
Win a grand on a 3-1 each way at Haymarket and you get to rip his hat off with a crane, only to see that hat and head are one, causing decapitation.

Optional extras
• Crappy little pen found only in bookies and Argos.

NEXT MONTH
Ben Elton And The Emperor's Tomb

"Take back what you said about my grandmother's beard!" Gimli lets rip with axe and tongue...

trace elf and 'appiness

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

EA remains curiously tight-lipped on the matter, but Tolkien's epic looks set for a 2003 release on Xbox.

At a recent Electronic Arts open day, we checked out the PS2 version of *Lord Of The Rings*. It was nothing short of stunning. But where was the Xbox version? We quizzed EA...

EA: "*Lord Of The Rings* won't appear on any other consoles until after Christmas."
XGamer: "So...we'll see an Xbox release next year, then?"
EA: "Erm... no comment... [goes on to repeat above statement]."

So as good as a yes in our experience. The adventure encompasses the first two instalments of the entire trilogy, and is played from several characters' points of view—Aragorn, Gimli, Legolas and another secret unlockable character. Frodo, perhaps?

What follows is a beautifully detailed hack-'n'-slash adventure, where you carve your way through hordes of Orcs, Uruk-Hai and other evil entities. The environments are stunningly rendered, as are the characters—they're the spit of their celluloid counterparts, and move in an uncommonly fluid way.

The game also involves some minor RPG elements. As you fight, you're rated on your combat finesse and awarded a subsequent score. At the end of the level, your points are totted up and spent on character-specific upgrades, such as new combat skills or weapons—much the same as *Devil May Cry*.

The action takes place right across Middle Earth, thrusting you into locations and scenarios plucked straight from the tales. The sense of atmosphere is incredible, from the whispering wooded swamps of Fangorn to the chaos that follows the siege of Rohan. The big battle scenes are particularly impressive, dumping you bodily into enormous, swirling struggles, where embattled villagers attempt to fight off the marauding hordes of Saruman.

Epic stuff—and it will be coming to Xbox, the question is when

Who EA
When 2003

Lithe Legolas lays into a paltry Orc assault with a storm of arrows.

WIRED> *Bomberman* set to fuse with Xbox thanks to Hudson

charts

xbox top 10

The games that are currently making tills go "Kerching!"

#	GAME NAME	XGAMER	VERDICT
1 (1) ▬	**HALO** Bungie **Microsoft**	9/10	BUY!
2 (New entry) ➔	**HUNTER: THE RECKONING** High Voltage **Virgin**	3/10	KILL
3 (2) ↓	**007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE** Electronic Arts **Electronic Arts**	6/10	RENT
4 (4) ▬	**PROJECT GOTHAM RACING** Bizarre Creations **Microsoft**	9/10	BUY!
5 (3) ↓	**SPIDER-MAN** Treyarch **Activision**	6/10	RENT
6 (7) ↑	**DEAD OR ALIVE 3** Tecmo **Microsoft**	9/10	BUY!
7 (6) ↓	**MAX PAYNE** Remedy **Take 2**	9/10	BUY!
8 (New entry) ➔	**GUNMETAL** Rage **Rage**	5/10	LEAVE
9 (9) ▬	**MOTO GP URT** Climax **THQ**	8/10	BUY!
10 (Re-entry) ➔	**ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE** Microsoft **Microsoft**	7/10	BUY!

KEY: ➔ Slam Dunkin' ↑ Moving Up ↓ Sliding Down ▬ Non Mover

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SALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

We ditch the sequels and licences to show the most popular originals...

1 (1) ▬	HALO	Bungie / Microsoft
2 (New entry) ➔	HUNTER: THE RECKONING	High Voltage / Virgin
3 (3) ▬	MAX PAYNE	Remedy / Take 2
4 (New entry) ➔	GUNMETAL	Rage / Rage
5 (2) ↓	MOTO GP URT	Climax / THQ

> Massively multiplayer Marvel superhero effort mooted by makers of *Galaxies*

trace sam blam fever

SERIOUS SAM

Not the famous fire-douser's lesser-known brother, but the chortlesome PC monster masher, refined Xbox-ward.

PC gamers will be familiar with *Serious Sam*, the mad-as-a-box-of-frogs shooter from Croteam. But according to its developer, the upcoming Xbox incarnation is going to blow the PC version out of the silicon waters.

In bad-ass *Duke Nukem* stylee, *Serious Sam* is an irreverent, gory and hugely fun first-person gunfest. You'll be lopping off heads with chainsaws, rendering alien bosses down to their component tissues and generally ripping the galaxy up in a time-travelling orgy of blood, cordite and daft quips.

The original was massively popular, spawning something of a cult following, and we expect the Xbox effort to go down just as well. Croteam is promising some stunningly realistic effects, and is already dropping scary phrases such as procedural texturing and hyper-mapping into the hype machine. No news yet on whether the game will carry an age rating, but given the intense subject matter we wouldn't be surprised.

We don't expect Sam to give Master Chief a run for his money quite yet, but, hey, he sounds like he'd be more of a laugh down the pub...

Who Croteam/Take Two
When 2003

Only a mother could love such a face--that and the end of my shooter: "Die, you ugly freak!"

Dismembering alien bosses like this tottering terror is just part of Serious Sam's galaxy-roaming remit. Other times he just gets to kill things outright.

briefs

EXTREME ACTION Sean Murray's Pro Wakeboarder from Activision is coming to Xbox. Attached to a speedboat with a rope, you pull off [illegible] the ropes to grind scenery before picking it up again.

trace compo

BRUCE LEE

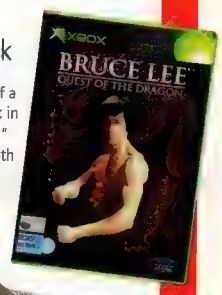
Win an Xbox, *Quest Of The Dragon* and epic Lee flick

Bruce Lee (the man) is an XGamer office hero. He had more people on their back than Amsterdam's notorious red light district, could fly upside-down for hours at a time and had so much mental strength he forced himself to only ever sleep in an armchair with wooden arms. Hard.

To celebrate the great geezer's memory, we're serving up a prize that puts even the *Play Your Cards Right* Brucie Bonus to shame. The winner will win an Xbox with a copy of *Bruce Lee: Quest Of The Dragon* to play with. Three runners-up will bag a copy of the game and the truly fabulous DVD feature film *Way Of The Dragon*. All you have to do is spell Bruce's famous battle scream in no more than 20 letters. We'll type it into a Steve Hawkings verbalator and the one that resembles Bruce the most wins. It's harder than you think. Even Mark (who's been writing for, ooh, ages) had a crack. It sounded more like a cowboy bucking his bronco.

So bang your answer on the back of a postcard (or sealed envelope) and send it in to. The "Yeeeeoooaaaaaahhhhh!!!!!!!!!" Compo, **XGamer** Magazine, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW. Alternatively, e-mail your ear-bleeder to us directly via xgamer@futurenet.co.uk

The closing date's 19 September. Good luck.



> Lisa from *DOA: Volleyball* to be new character in *Dead Or Alive 4* > Tecmo survival-horror effort *Project Zero* (nee *Fatal Frame*) coming to Xbox

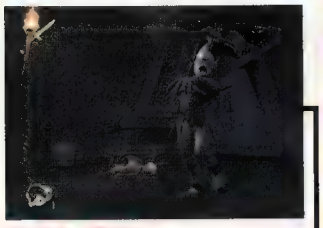
XGAMER launch control

here they come, just a-walkin' down your street...

ON SALE > AUG 30
REVIEW > XGAMER 07

COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

Firmly establishing itself as the Xbox's strategy game of choice, *Commandos 2* requires a lot of cunning. The graphics aren't perfect and the interface takes getting used to, but if the idea of knifing the Hun in the back appeals, then this is the game for you.



ON SALE > NOV 08
REVIEW > XGAMER 11

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Vivendi's take on the fantasy über-classic takes its licence from Tolkien's book, not the film. Spying an opportunity to appeal to the most anal of Hobbit-fans, it includes characters the film left out and enables you to romp in the action-adventure style as Frodo, his hirsute pals, or Gandalf and Aragorn. EA's version will hit next year.

COMING SOON	PUBLISHER	GENRE	ON SALE	Will buy	Maybe	Stuff it!
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	Inline skating	Aug 30			
Bruce Lee: Quest Of The Dragon	Vivendi	Beat-'em-up	Aug 30			
Commandos 2	Eidos	Strategy	Aug 30			
Turok Evolution	Acclaim	First-person shooter	Sep 06			
Buffy The Vampire Slayer	EA	Action-adventure	Sep 13			
Quantum Redshift	Microsoft	Sci-fi racing	Sep 13			
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	Activision	BMX	Sep 13			
Street Hoops	Activision	Basketball	Sep 13			
Chase	Bam	Stunt driving	Sep 19			
Crazy Taxi 3	Sega	Pick-'em up	Sep 20			
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Stealth-shooter	Sep 20			
Battle Engine Aquila	Infogrames	Shoot-'em-up	Sep 20			
The Thing	Vivendi	Survival horror	Sep 20			
Blade 2	Activision	Slash-'em-up	Sep 27			
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	Rally	Sep 27			
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	Surfin' USA	Sep 27			
Timesplitters 2	Eidos	First-person shooter	Sep 27			
Conflict: Desert Storm	SCi	Action-strategy	Sep			
Terminator: Dawn Of Fate	Infogrames	Third-person action	Oct 11			
Unreal Championship	Infogrames	First-person shooter	Oct 25			
House Of The Dead 3	Sega	Light gun shooter	Oct			
Panzer Dragoon Orta	Sega	Shoot-'em-up	Oct			
Rally Fusion: Race Of Champions	Activision	Rally	Oct			
Silent Hill 2	Konami	Survival horror	Oct			
Superman: Man Of Steel	Infogrames	Action-adventure	Oct			
WWE Raw	THQ	Wrestling	Oct			
Fellowship Of The Ring	Vivendi	Action-adventure	Nov 08			
Transworld Snowboarding	Infogrames	Snowboarder	Nov 15			
James Bond 007: Nightfire	EA	First-person shooter	Nov 15			
Blinx: The Timesweeper	Microsoft	3D platformer	Nov			
Jedi Knight II	LucasArts	First-person shooter	Nov			
Minority Report	Activision	Action-adventure	Nov			
Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Stealth-shooter	Nov			
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	Beat-'em-up	Nov			

ON SALE > SEPT 20
REVIEW > XGAMER 09

CRAZY TAXI 3: HIGH ROLLER

The latest instalment in the nutso cabbie series makes it to Xbox. Career around three huge cities driving various odd fares as fast as possible to make money. All-new sub-games should hopefully add some depth, but the high-school rock soundtrack could well be more annoying than a post-haircut itchy neck.

ON SALE > NOV
REVIEW > XGAMER 10

SPLINTER CELL

Modern-day espionage makes its Xbox debut in this Tom Clancy stealth-'em up. A potential *Metal Gear* beater, the threatening atmos twangs your nerves like a banjo as you penetrate goon central. As a lone op, you fight not with brute strength but with subtlety and gadgets—like the fibre-optic camera you can slip under doors. Looks brilliant.

XGAMER MOST WANTED

Splinter Cell's 'cameras under doors' gimmick has us sweating buckets and promptly kicks *MGS2* into touch. *Galleon*'s spectacular beasties ensure it a high entry but *Halo 2* requires no introduction.

1 (New entry)	SPLINTER CELL Ubi Soft Stealth-'em-up	→
2 (1)	HALO 2 Bungie/Microsoft First-person shooter	↓
3 (New entry)	GALLEON Confounding Factor/Virgin Action-adventure	→
4 (2)	MGS2: SUBSTANCE Konami Stealth-'em-up	↓
5 (New entry)	PANZER DRAGOON ORTA Smilebit/Sega Shoot-'em up	→

READER'S MOST WANTED

Which upcoming games are you most looking forward to? Cast your vote for the chance to scoop a top prize.

Name _____ Address _____

Postcode _____ Email _____

XBOX GAMES WISH LIST...

List your five most wanted Xbox games, then send them to the address below...

1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

5 _____ If I win the Most Wanted prize, please send me the following free game _____

READERS RETURN THIS COUPON TO:
My Most Wanted, XGamer Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW **Or email** xgamer@futurenet.co.uk

READERS' MOST WANTED

Anticipation for *Halo 2* remains at fever pitch, despite its distant release date. *Project Ego* and *Conflict: Desert Storm* move on up and you're looking forward to *WWE Raw* too. This month's winner of an Xbox game is Ajay Patel from Heaton.

1 (1)	HALO 2 Bungie/Microsoft First-person shooter	—
2 (3)	PROJECT EGO Big Blue Box/Microsoft RPG	↑
3 (New Entry)	WWE RAW Anchor/THQ Wrestling	→
4 (5)	CONFLICT: DESERT STORM SCi Squad-based war sim	↑
5 (New Entry)	UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP Infogrames First-person shooter	→

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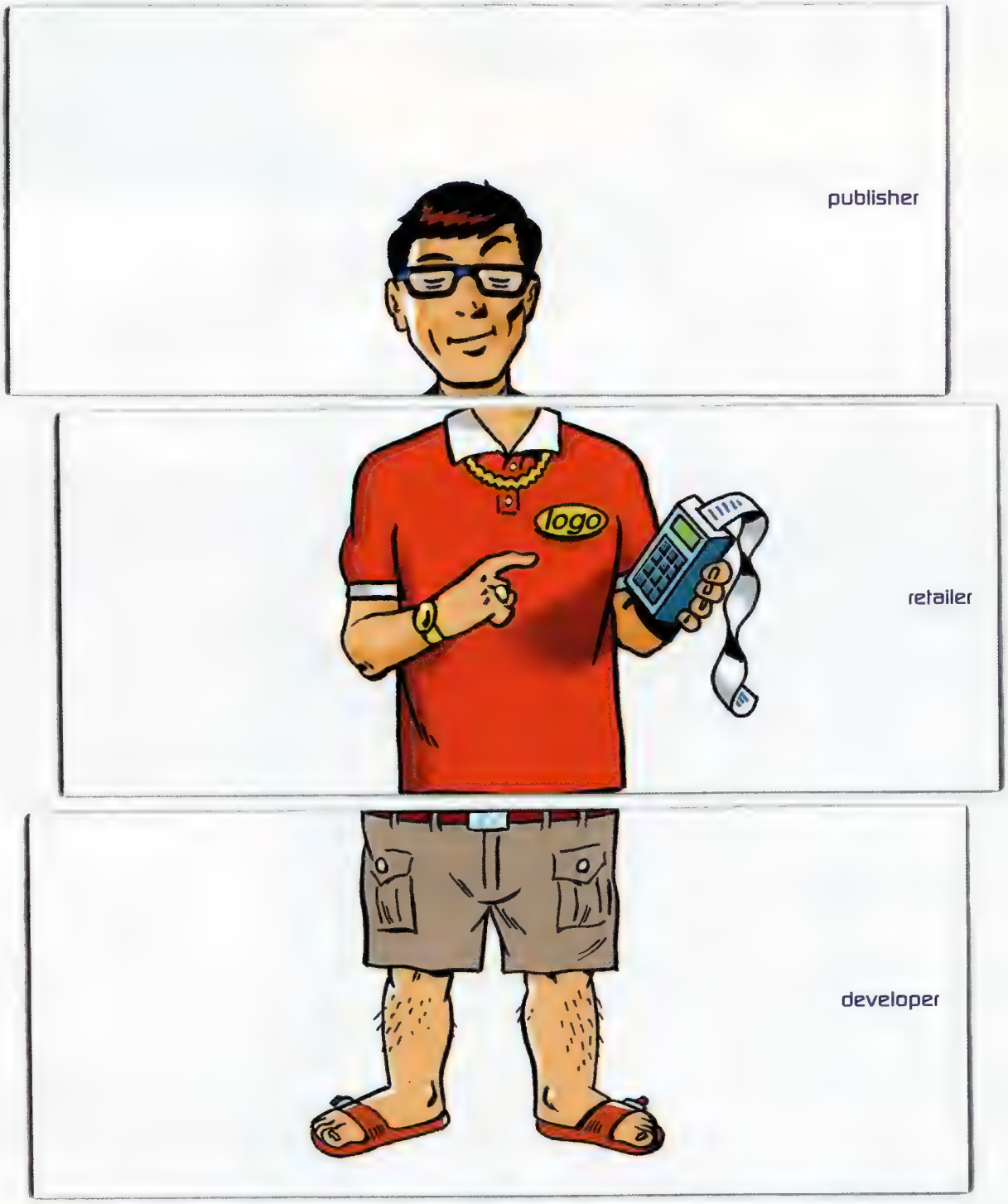

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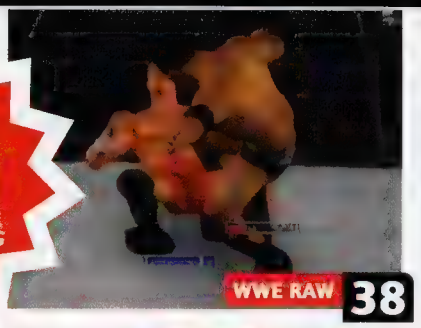
XGAMER we've played into the future

92 PIKKIES THAT'LL HAVE YOU GOING "CRIKEY!"



select

22 **SEGA GT 2002**
Nice looking racer that could give *Gran Turismo 3* a run for its money—if it's cleaned up before release, that is.

26 **MECH ASSAULT**
Dress up as a massive robot and smash everything in sight into little bloody pieces. Sounds better than that *Tour De France* game.

28 **DEAD TO RIGHTS**
Third-person shooting a bit like *Max Payne* (but without the *Max* bit).

32 **HOUSE OF THE DEAD 3**
Blast a load of nasty creepies in a gory as hell zombie-fest (with a lightgun if you fancy it).

34 **LAMBORGHINI**
Fancy being a millionaire playboy driving Lambos all over the shop? Course you do, everyone does.

37 **MYST III: EXILE**
The real puzzle is why they keep making these. Most mysterious. Ooh, a clue...

38 **WWE RAW**
Hunks in trunks that stink like skunks. This pretty pongy US wrestling game finally gets a UK release. Will we ever be free?

39 **SILENT HILL 2: INNER FEAR**
Another US game to fly over the Atlantic ocean and land on our rainy plains. This time, round it's about foul creatures who have returned from the crypt. Again.

HOW GAMES MAGS WORK...

ALPHA CODE
The earliest game code publishers will show. Major features missing; provides a sketchy indication of gameplay.

BETA CODE
First real sight of full game. Still undergoing bug-testing, but the majority of missions and graphics are complete.

PRE-SUBMISSION
Virtually finished, code is ready for submission to Microsoft quality control with a view to confirming production.

first contact
The first look at an exciting title, that our superior games antennae have detected at a very early stage in the development process.

hands on
This is when we expect to play the game for the first time and report our initial findings to you. A good early indication of how it's shaping up.

reviews
The acid test. The final code is now ready for us to rip apart, leaving no sprite unturned during our merciless testing. We do it for you.

HANDS ON PREDICTIONS

Uppers/ Downers We're not going to arse around and write vague, ill-informed previews that raise false hopes about a game's potential. We'll rank its good and bad points right here.

Forecast A rough guide to the prospects of the game based on its early form. Bear in mind this is not a final judgement. A lot can change between preview stage and review.

XGAMER PREDICTS

- **PAL Convulsion** Prepare to be repelled by borders unless Capcom breaks habit of poor PAL conversions
- **Resident experts** Aren't we all tired of this by now?
- **Zombies** It's hard to go wrong with our pulmonarily-challenged chums
- **Action** No auto lock-on here, you'll need to be good at games.
- **Medieval Japan** Because, 400 years and counting, ninja are *still* cool.
- **Capcom** It's made by one of our favourite Japanese developers

Onimusha wouldn't look revolutionary if you stuck a beret and a cigar on it, but you can't beat a good solid adventure. HIT!

Genma Onimusha Review next issue

GREEN IS GO!
This game's looking good. You can start getting excited... NOW.

CAUTION
Hmmm. This one could go either way. Don't rush in.

RED ALERT
Ouch. An unfolding tragedy—unlikely they'll save it in time.

DO NOT MISS...

STAYING ALIVE *Prisoner Of War* well and truly cracked like a massive bank safe.

SURROUNDINGS Don't expect *Halo*-style individual blades of grass or *Rallisport*-like knobbly tarmac. But at least the scenery gets the job done.

CHEERANCE The 3D map is a handy innovation. It spins around as you do, which is a blessed relief after the cricks in your neck you get from *Rallisport Challenge*'s limited fixed perspective.

DAZZLING You know those halls of mirrors they have at fairgrounds? They're nothing next to the number of reflections bouncing around here. The sun glints off everything, from the door handles to the exhaust pipes.

BRUISING It could just be glitches in the beta-version AI, of course, but the CPU cars seem to love a good ruck. This makes the racing very close when you're evenly matched for horsepower.

Xbox ONLY!

'Cos of the hard drive, you get ten save slots. So if five races down that Alfa Giulia just isn't working out, it's easy to rewind and switch cars.

hands on

sega gt 2002

125 cars, shiny paintwork... But will it make Gran Turismo look like Great-Gran Turismo?

release october complete

Acquiring a nearly-complete version of a game you're really looking forward to puts you in an awful position. No, really. The temptation is to take the phone off the hook and gorge yourself on gaming goodness. But you mustn't. Features will be missing. Bits won't work properly. And, most importantly, it'll lack that essential soupçon of je ne sais quois that's generally not injected till the final days of balancing and fine-tuning. To jump in prematurely would be like taking your Lasagne For One out of the microwave while it's still cold in the middle. Restraint is imperative. Take a few screenshots, jot down early impressions, toss the DVD-R into the bin and sit on your hands until the programmers have finished their work. It's the only sensible thing to do.

So, anyway, I've clocked up a good 30 hours on **XGamer**'s dodgy beta version of *Sega GT 2002*. The menu screens are still in Japlish, the AI cars keep

game
- genre Racing
- players 1-2
- movies segajp/xx/segagt02
- code stage Beta

company
- developer Wow Entertainment
- publisher Sega
- contact +0208 232 9700 www.sega

THE WHEEL THING

They don't make 'em like they used to, eh? Except that these ones go like the clappers.

1 Crap? Good Lord, no. With a bit of tinkering in your garage it'll go like a rocket. Eventually.

2 How about this one, then? The Evo VII's direct ancestor, gleaming in a...a... nice custard colour.

3 Don't you see what you're turning down here?

4 Oh, have it your way. Here's something sleek and modern, then. Much more your kind of thing...

5 Whatever vehicle you choose, everything's tweakable, although not to the extent that it is in *Gran Turismo 3*.

This might resemble a procession of gleaming hearses, but there's nothing funereal about a Jaguar's pace. Poor old John Thaw's surely turning in his grave at the thought of what these classic designs are going to be put through...

Instant expert in 5 easy steps

Manipulate these facts and conquer and dream the path.

- **Wheeler-dealing** Over 125 cars to spend your hard-won credits on, from the '60s to the, er, '00s.
- **Scrapes** All breakages must be paid for, so avoid clouting other cars
- **Argy-bargy** Although that'll be difficult: the AI drivers take no prisoners.
- **Modes** The main *GT 2002* mode is supplemented by a historical mode and, of course, quick races.
- **Glistening** You've never seen computerised chrome sparkle like this.

CAREER OF THE YEAR

Career mode, Gran Turismo mode, full season, call it what you will, every racing game's got one—*Sega GT 2002* included. (At the moment they're calling it, um, Sega GT 2002 mode.) You earn cash in event races, spend it on fast cars and special spark plugs and things, and then enter official races to climb the career ladder.

After each set of races, you've got to pass a driving test. At the moment the second one is utterly impossible—and it doesn't even ask you to read a number plate—but they're sure to fix that. Aren't they? (Whimper.)

sega gt 2002

performing three-point turns in the middle of the road and the difficulty level's all over the place. But my chrome-laden 1970 Skyline has just topped 300bhp and I can't... make myself... stop... playing...

The thing is, I've been keen to find out how *Sega GT 2002* would cope with the fearsome challenge it faces. After all, it's being born into a world that adored *Gran Turismo*, gratefully gobbled up more of the same in *Gran Turismo 2*, but squirmed in its seat when asked to pay another 40 quid, plus the cost of a whole new console, for a third helping of much the same thing.

retro chic

On top of that, *Sega GT 2002* is the follow-up to *Sega GT*. And while *Sega GT* was no disgrace to the Dreamcast, it didn't exactly enter the annals of Sega racing greatness alongside *Daytona*, *Sega Rally* and the sublime *F355 Challenge*. Woolly handling and bland, wibbly circuits saw to that. And here's the scariest thing of all: of the 16 upcoming games pictured in last month's Surveillance and Hands On sections, precisely half are racing games...

If you're as big a car nerd as me, though, this is one more racing game you'll simply have to get. *Gran Turismo* may have opened the West's eyes to the delights of the Nissan Skyline and the Mitsubishi FTO, but *Sega GT 2002* stretches our credulity to breaking point by glamming up such unlikely contenders as the 1974 Toyota Levin and the Mark I Celica. Their outlines may be familiar to you from rusting MoT-failures left forlornly outside dilapidated student digs, but here they look mouth-watering with the sun glinting off their polished chrome radiator grilles. You can almost smell the velour.

The Western options are scarcely less eclectic. How about an Inspector Morse MkII Jag? Perhaps the unapologetically ugly Lotus Europa? Personally, I'm eagerly saving my credits for a Caterham Superseven,

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER

TIME TRAVELLING

hands on

little more than an engine on wheels. Although, that's only after I've secured my all-time dream wheels, a white Series 1 Lotus Esprit straight out of *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

All the cars certainly look the part. The modelling's spot-on and the Xbox's mighty circuitry deftly covers them in shiny paint and gleaming chrome. Scenery-wise, it's no *Rallisport Challenge*—you're cheered on by cardboard cut-out spectators—but it's on a par with *Gran Turismo 3* and *Project Gotham*.

handle with care

And what of the handling? Well, it's early days, of course, but it seems that once again Wow is going for a more "arcadey" feel than its Sony rivals. Going too fast round a corner? No problem: just tap the brakes without fear of spinning out. Which is all very well, of course, but in its current state, *GT 2002* doesn't quite give you the "Yes!" feeling you get from snicking precisely through a chicane in *GT3*. And, unlike in *F355 Challenge*, you don't find your knuckles whitening as you hold off on the brakes until the last possible moment on the main straight at Monza.

There's also, currently, little difference in handling between front-wheel-drive and rear-wheel-drive cars, and the tiny Lotus Elan drives in much the same way as the hulking Corvette. But I'm sure rows of Japanese programmers are furiously working on this as I type.

They're also, hopefully, going to tighten up the circuits a little. While the courses I've seen so far are way better than the insipid offerings of the Dreamcast version, after the 483rd identical long easy left on White Steps I was longing to get back to the taut double-apexers, nerve-racking hairpins and plunging right-handers of *GT2*'s Laguna Seca.

Where *GT 2002* does show promise is in the AI department. These frisky fellas will come as a nasty shock to anyone raised on the sheeplike processions of

You'll need sticky tyres, short gearing and all the bhp you can muster to win the drag races. It's highly exciting, although bafflingly there's no two-player version as yet. (Gaming historians may recall rumours that *Gran Turismo 2* was to include a drag racing mode, but it was stripped out when developers Polyphony ran out of time. In memorial, though, they left in the virtually steering-free HKS drag cars.)

DAMAGE CONTROL

Getting previous with the other cars won't just dent your precious motor—it'll dent your pocket too.

Each time you take a hit from another car, so does your damage meter (top right)—although sadly there's no physical evidence of wear and tear.

The lower it goes, the more expenses are deducted from your prize money. A simple schematic shows just how close your car is to being a total wreck.

sega gt 2002

the *Gran Turismo* series. They really seem determined to win, swerving viciously to stop you overtaking and ruthlessly elbowing one another into the gravel.

Similarly laudable is the damage system. While *Gran Turismo* players swiftly learn to win races by rebounding from walls and other cars, doing that here will send your damage meter plummeting. And every pixel it shrinks by is another credit deducted from your winnings. As usual, there's no visible damage to the cars, though, and I'm not convinced by the way tyre, brake and engine wear are carried over from race to race. This could get tedious, especially if you're forced to wade through pages of "Loading please wait" menus after each race as you enter your garage to find out if anything needs mending.

So I'm going to ask the Art Ed to put a little orange "Steady" light on this one. Not because I'm not enjoying *Sega GT 2002*—I am. Several times I've caught myself with a big grin on my face while belting along at 182mph in my souped-up 1973 Corolla. But the world of racing games is so crowded and so ultra-competitive that, until the Wow boys have given *Sega GT* its final race fettling, it genuinely is impossible to say whether it'll streak to the head of the pack or get snarled up in the traffic jam that is the Xbox release schedule. Exciting, eh? **Jonathan Davies**

GAMER PREDICTS

- **Metal** No Allegros here: the 125+ cars have been skilfully chosen to warm any petrolhead's cockles.
- **Sheen** You've never seen paintwork gleam like this.
- **Ideas** Chronicle mode, drag racing, the damage meter, the photos...
- **Steerage** Old-school handling won't impress Gran Turists.
- **Wavy** And the gently-curving, *Ridge-Racer*-like tracks are a bit one-finger-on-the-wheel at times.

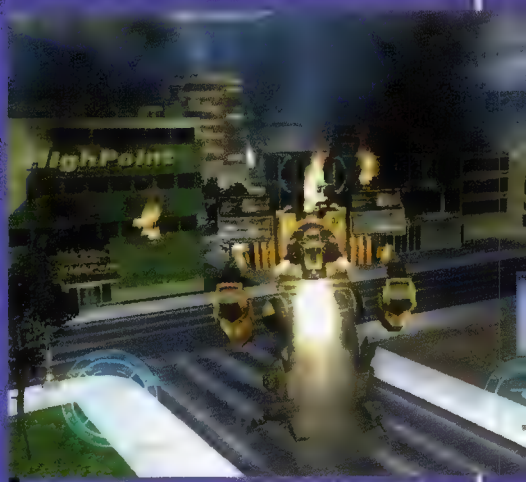
Could be a *GT3* beater, but there's lots still to be done. And will the simplistic handling prove too undemanding for today's post-*F355* generation?

STEADY

Sega GT 2002_**Review in the November issue**

JET SET, GO!

After the mission briefing, you get to customise your battle-clobber. Choose from a closet of rakish weaponry, armoured overcoats and natty accessories like jump-jets.



Getting air is a fast way to move out of trouble. Burn boosters to leap incoming missiles and to hop buildings when you need concrete cover.

Use your BattleMech's jets to land on a roof and deal death from above. Notice the collapsed towerblock smeared all over leftfield.

Xbox ONLY!

Sandstorms, blizzards, dust until you're [illegible] ing half-blind.

SCRAP METAL

Being a 50-foot tall metal mammoth is much less of a bonus when you're picking on someone your own size. Mech duels are more than a trial of brute strength; it's time to pop the cunning pills...

1 AIEEE! Trapped in the open between two enemy bruisers.
2 Switch out of machine gun and crank up the XXL missiles.
3 Armoured mechs start to limp and crackle as shells hit home.
4 Ouchie! The bigger they are, the hotter they brew.

hands on

mech assault

Kind of like *Sim City* in reverse, *Mech Assault* remembers when it was all buildings around here...

release november complete

Like going commando, filling up a water pistol or being given diplomatic immunity, it must be impossible to don a BattleMech suit without feeling an irresistible tingle of mischief. Certainly, piloting a giant robot around Microsoft's new shooter brings out the worst in me. Suddenly, you're 50 feet tall, your trousers are made of steel and your arms end in cannons that fire shells the size of Volkswagens. Time to show the world who's boss.

A city of gleaming skyscrapers lies ahead. Wax moustache twirling, you romper-stomp into town to show off your new missile system. Whoops, there goes a building, disintegrating in a streak of warheads. Yikes, down goes a car park in the face of a negligent laser discharge. Oh noooo—glass, girders and concrete spew from the gutted hulk of some giant corporate erection.

Everything your gun points at—men, tanks, buses, bridges—has a tendency to collapse in a heap. Which is

game
- **Genre** Mech shooter
- **Players** 1-12 (split-screen, system link and Xbox Live)
- **Movies** www.xbox.com/mechassault/default.htm
- **Code stage** Alpha

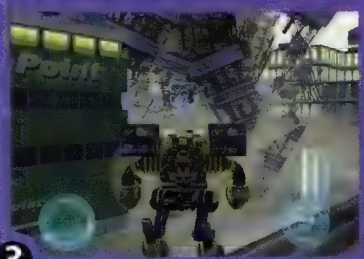
company
- **Developer** Day1 Studios
- **Publisher** Microsoft
- **Contact** 0870 601 0100

DEATH OF A SKYSCRAPER

All tower blocks are *slaaaags*. There's only one thing they understand and that's a spread o' missiles right up the prefabs.

1 The first broadside hits home, causing the interior lights to blow out and fires to spark up.

2 Falling shots are rewarded with spectacular showers of glass, heightening the sense of carnage.



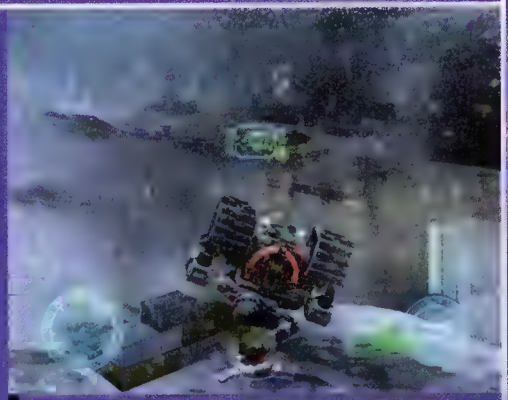
3 The whole stack comes down like a Jenga set after a TNT tickle. Now rake the rubble for power-ups.

DON'T MECH ME MAD

The weapons and their FX repercussions are as oversized as the mechs themselves. Fantasy weapons fry up enemy security, laser rifles punch magnetic spouts (think *Doom*'s rail gun), while plasma bazooks and mortar nuclear

NICEY ICEY

Weather-wise, *Mech Assault* really comes into its own. On the ice levels, snowstorms kick up thick flakes and buildings fall apart like they use sandwich filler for cement. The choking combo of smoke and blizzard reduced visibility to the point where I wished my mech was equipped with a white stick instead of jump-jets.



Weather genuinely pumps an extra dose of battle-chaos into *Mech Assault*: as targets escape behind a blinding screen of fumes, fire and ice.

THE DEVELOPER SPEAKS!

SELF DEFENCE

XGamer: "What makes your game so blinkin' good, then?"

Denny Thorley, producer bod of *MechAssault*, answers...

"*MechAssault* is about fabulous, unbelievable, destructive power. Everything in the game supports how devastating these huge war machines are. *MechAssault* wraps this interactivity into a very fast paced action game that requires you to think and react quickly. The best part? Xbox Live. Playing with your friends online, being able to communicate via voice... how cool is that?"

mech assault

THE IRON WAR-MONGERS

Missions quickly degenerate into chaotic heavy metal brawls. Not only are there rival mechs to beat off, but gunships attack from the skies, paratroopers drop in and enemy tanks must be crushed underfoot.

Miss an enemy mech and your stray missiles can bring down half a street. Duck behind a building and your opponent can blow your cover apart.

exactly what's needed in a game of titanic tank bashing. I want to make a mess, and by the time a platoon of enemy mechs has been dealt with, some erratic aiming has carved out a few new sight lines in the once proud cityscape.

big metal muthas

Huge robot games can only succeed if they deliver the impact you'd expect from weapons that register on the Richter scale. So *Mech Assault*'s rubble-dashed war zones are a giant step in the right direction. As is the decision to use the *Halo* control system. Past mech games have seemingly been designed for multi-armed mutants who can press 40 buttons at once. But on Xbox, you'll be able to swivel and dance your 'bot across the battlefield with all the grace of Masterchief. The downside is the lack of human contact. Metallic foes lack personality—it's hard to tell when an enemy mech is panicking, for instance. *Mech Assault* compensates with scale. There's a real kick to be had crunching a school bus between metallic toes. It's fun to watch weeny infantry pop away with inadequate weapons—and even more exciting to use skyscrapers as makeshift cover while desperately trying to outrun a guided missile. When it comes to mass destruction, big could well be beautiful. **Mark Donald**

XGAMER PREDICTS

- **Blinding** Hostile weather effects generate the right atmosphere.
- **Carnage** Tectonic battles rage out of control.
- **Handy** *Halo* control system sticks you in the driving seat.
- **Robotic** Metal opponents lack soul.
- **Lightweight** Joypad vibrates every time you take a step, but other than that there's little sense you're really piloting a multi-ton combat colossus.

Looks impressive, but success will depend on whether *Mech Assault*'s appetite for destruction is matched by equal helpings of combat subtlety.

STEADY

TAKEDOWN NO.1

Slater's an artist. And we're not talking berets, moustaches and floppy brushes over uncorked rural Chardonnay. Although you might find a severed ear or two if you look hard enough...

1 Slater leaps inside the hitman's fire-arc and lunges for him.

2 An elbow in the ribcage and the fool drops his gun. Mistake No1.

3 Slater quickly grabs the man's head in the crook of his arm.

4 A skilful flip later, and the fatal coup de grâce is delivered...

5 POOM! A solitary bullet to the head sends this one straight down. Scratch one Mafia goon. Now make like a tree.

TASTE THE PAYNE

It's scenes like this that have prompted cries of "*Max Payne*-a-like!" But don't let the Bullet Time fool you...

To the max: engage Bullet Time, dive like a swan and take 'em down. Check out the detail on his shoes. Slater got sole.

status: shocker

hands on

dead to rights

Badass cop seeks goon hordes for peppery gun-love and a few kicks. GSOH essential.

release tba complete

Ever see the movie *The Doors*, all about Jim Morrison and his band of drug-addled hippy-rock crooners? Well, Val Kilmer played the man himself, and at first glance, he looked more like Jim Morrison than Jim Morrison ever did.

Weird but true. And in a similar way, *Dead To Rights* looks more like *Max Payne* than *Max Payne* does. Intense third-person action, slow-mo firefight sequences, cinematic vibe... The only obvious difference is that it might just be (whisper it) *better* than *Max Payne*. But how can this be?

Because Slater, *Dead To Rights*' chisel-jawed hero, manages to out-badass Max every powder-burnt step of the way. Here's an example. You exit a lift to find a hood with his back to you. With a firm press of ●, you grasp him from behind, snake an arm 'round his neck and use him as a human shield. Six more gangsters hear the commotion, charge in, and riddle their

game

- **Genre** Third-person shooter
- **Players** 1
- **Movies** www.namco.com/dtr
- **Code stage** Beta

company

- **Developer** Namco
- **Publisher** Namco
- **Contact** 0208 324 6000 www.namco.com

CLEANING UP THE STREETS

In his unending pursuit of the Mafia middle-management, Slater extends his graceful choreography to the streets...

1 Parked cars make great cover from which to pop up and cap the gangsters at a safe distance...

2 ... but sometimes you have to face your foe with nothing but a sure aim and a steady hail of bullets.

3 After thinning their numbers, it's time to retreat and reload—and be quick about it.

4 A soon as a hood comes near, Slater darts out, grabs him and uses his petrified body as a human shield.

5 Riot shotgun. Class. Now's a good time to let the scum sneak up nice and close...

CANINE CANING

Low on ammo? Then whistle for Shadow, your faithful four-legged fiend. He's dead vish.

1 The action's hotting up and your ammo's dwindling...

2 Targeting a nearby perp, Slater sticks two fingers in his gob and whistles for a little canine assistance. Shadow's a fire-and-forget weapon...

3 And there he is! With a leap and a growl, he rips the throat out of the targeted crim, leaving you free to deal with the rest of the mobsters. Shadow's such a well-trained pooch, he even retrieves the man's gun for Slater. Bless.

instant expert in 5 easy steps

Eat lead, mother-lover. Here's where *DTR* is at.

- **Barking** Order a chomping woofer to tear out your enemies' throats for maw fun.
- **Tarantino-tastic** Glorious slow-mo takedown scenes will make you gush in an orgy of ultra-violence.
- **Goon-drilla** It's one long head-melting mantra of mob-nobbling fun.
- **Variegated** So many ways to play—guns, fists, stealth, Shadow.
- **Gore vital** A high-class action game gift-wrapped in entrails. Yums.

dead to rights

twitching, jerking pal with small-arms fire. Meanwhile, you're targeting them and taking each man out, one by one. And when the party's over, Slater turns out the lights by twirling his spent vessel around on the spot, nudging his pistol muzzle into the man's temple, and putting him down, executioner style. Yow.

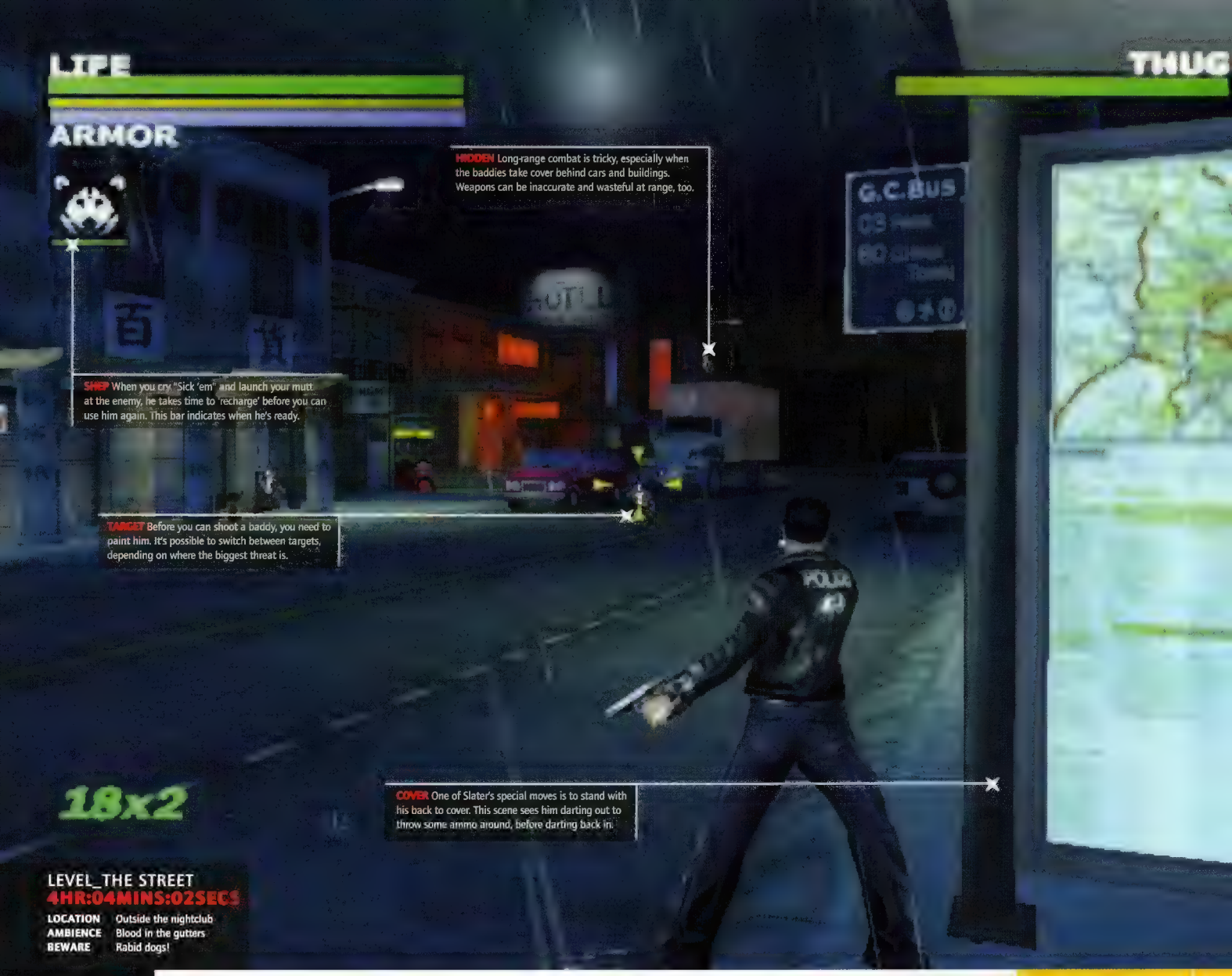
shadow puppet

The game is peppered with such classic movie moments: slow-mo takedowns, Woo-style twin-gun firefights, rifle-butt-nose interaction... There's a lot going on. And the beauty of it is, as good as *Max Payne* was, *DTR* shifts it all to an entirely new level. It's all down to the range of combat options being made available. In any hostile situation, there are many things you can do, rather than simply engaging Bullet Time and leaping slowly into the fray.

First and foremost, dodge and fire. Obviously. Second, find cover. If you're near a wall, you can back up to it, Snake-style, and peep out to loose off a few rounds. The same goes for low walls—you can duck behind them and pop up for a few potshots.

If you're close to the enemy, you can forego firearms in favour of close combat. But while a few punches and kicks will do the job, you're better off tapping ⓪ and disarming your opponent. You're then treated to one of many little 'puppet shows', where Slater deftly disarms the man before him, then slaughters him in a swift and brutal fashion. He may leap up, wrap his legs around the man's neck and crack his spine. Or grab the man's rifle, spin it around in his hands, stick the muzzle in his belly, hoick him off the ground and pull the trigger. Or he may just whip his gun away and crack him in the face with the butt. It's these little moments of scripted cinematic glory that tie the fighting sequences into a seamless, stylish whole.

But ammo is scarce. Hence the disarm move, and Slater's other sly tactic—canine attack. When



HIDDEN Long-range combat is tricky, especially when the baddies take cover behind cars and buildings. Weapons can be inaccurate and wasteful at range, too.

SHEP When you cry "Sick 'em" and launch your mutt at the enemy, he takes time to 'recharge' before you can use him again. This bar indicates when he's ready.

TARGET Before you can shoot a baddy, you need to paint him. It's possible to switch between targets, depending on where the biggest threat is.

COVER One of Slater's special moves is to stand with his back to cover. This scene sees him darting out to throw some ammo around, before darting back in.

hands on

an enemy is in your sights, you can switch to Shadow, your faithful German Shepherd, and activate him as you would a weapon. He'll then bark, cane it onto the screen and maul said goon like a rag doll. He'll even scamper back, clutching the man's gun between his teeth like it's the Sunday paper, and drop it obediently at your feet. Good boy. You can imagine how useful this is when your ammo's low.

And then, of course, there's the Bullet Time style feature, where you leap slowly across the screen, target one baddy after another and feed them lead lunches. But the fact is, it's not as integral to the game as it is in *Max*–indeed, it's almost played down in favour of the game's other combat features. This is partly to do with the fact you face a stack of enemies in any given firefight, and you can only take down so many guys in one slow-mo leap. After that, you're vulnerable to those that are left standing. The net result is that you use the feature less frequently, plumping instead for the back-to-the-wall approach, or sending Shadow out for a bit of barky mayhem. It's our belief that Namco has deliberately played the Bullet Time effect down, as much to differentiate the game from *Max* as provide an original and engaging experience.

pole positions

Which *Dead To Rights* clearly is. We've not seen a game quite like it. It's gorged to the hackles with stimulating, engrossing combat sequences which you never quite tire of. And It's definitely not the one-trick pony that certain camps believed *Max* to be. At various points throughout the game, you're required to take on unusual challenges, quite unlike any other activities you engage in. In the second level, for example, you bump into your sister–in a pole-dancing club. And no prizes for guessing which side of the stage she's on. Trouble is, the crowd is full of scumbags on their night off and they're blocking Slater's path forwards. Naturally, he

BLOOD ON THE DANCEFLOOR

One of *Dead To Rights*' main locations is the local discotheque, where you'll face down hordes of badass henchmen and their twin-brother bosses...

You don't sneak up on our Slater. Not no way, no how. But if you want brain goo spattered over the lino, feel free to try.

In a nice change of pace, you sometimes find yourself weaponless and about to have your face panned in. Time to work those fists.

MAGIC MOMENTS

When it comes to the nonchalant takedown, Slater likes to deliver one of his stylish finishing moves. Even if you've seen every kung fu or action movie made since 1980, you'll still find some surprises here.

We'll try and explain the noise you hear when this happens: A collection of twigs and sticks, wrapped in a heavy piece of cloth, being snapped by Geoff Capes. Whoops, there goes lunch.

After a graceful, and agreeably violent tussle, Slater rips the rifle from this goon's grasp, pushes him into the air using his feet, and fills his belly full of lead. All in slow-mo-vision, of course. Pure class.

TAKEDOWN NO.2

We get so excited about these glorious sequences from *Dead To Rights*, we just had to show you another one. This scene sees Slater attacked by a group of nutters in menacing clown masks. Laugh this one off.

1 Grapple... Tug... Slater seems to be struggling with this guy.

2 The camera thrills by swooping cinematically around.

3 Zoom-shot: Our man yanks the shooter from clown-boy's grip.

4 Eat this! A more fitting demise we cannot imagine.

5 As if to put the scene in context, and to help you get your bearings back, the camera pulls right back. Beautifully executed to the last.

dead to rights

asks his sister to put on an extra-special show... What follows is a bizarre Bemani-style mini-game, where you control Slater's saucy sibling as she pumps, gyrates and cavorts across stage to distract the leering henchmen. Symbols corresponding to joypad buttons scroll across the screen, and you must hit them at the right moment to keep her moving. Miss a few, and the goons get bored of the show, look around, and notice Slater.

Yep, full of variety is *Dead To Rights* and to cap it off, it's a classic Namco game—smooth, polished, robust and great to look at. The controls feel so slick, you really get the sense of being in control of Slater, and that he's a frisky, agile guy. Of course, with all those combat options at your fingertips, the learning curve is a little tricky: it takes about half an hour before you feel you're totally in control and able to get the best out of the man. But that's all part of the fun, and, hey, it's a good sign—it means there's more to this game than meets the eye.

Take a closer look at any Doors album cover and it's evident Val Kilmer *doesn't* look terribly like Jim Morrison. They're two different people who just seem similar from afar. Likewise, Slater *isn't* Max Payne's long-lost twin. He's cut from more intricate cloth, and he's treading a very different path. We're looking forward to seeing where it leads... **Al Bickham**

GAMER PREDICTS

- **Hefty** Stacks of combat moves to learn and cherish. It's this variety that makes *DTR* such a unique experience.
- **Relentless** All-singing, all-dancing, all-action.
- **Mantra** Get lost in the hypnotic, endless combat.
- **Smart** Some inspired moments and clever gameplay elements.
- **Cine-tastic** Live out your John Woo dreams. The cinematic cut-scenes and takedown moves are superb.

Closer inspection reveals something quite different from *Max*—and original. Expect big things of Namco's latest hammer-blow effort. HIT!

Dead To Rights_**Review next issue**

GRAVE RAVERS These sick monkeys jump out of the glass cylinders in a bid to spike you senseless. They can't be reasoned with, just killed. There's a surprise.

SHELL SHOCK You've got to keep reloading after every four blasts of the shotgun or death will become you. Basically, just keep hitting reload as often as you shoot.

GERTCHA When one of these mingers gets this close, it's time to prepare for a nasty slash (and I don't mean a wee after drinking raw vinegar). Shoot the baddies nearest.

RED CROSS For some inexplicable reason, the crosshair is bright red—which makes keeping your peepers on it amidst all the carmine blood splattering a little difficult to say the least. Keep a beady eye on it.

TIMEY Your time bar steadily drops down as time passes. Keep it topped up by blowing away baddies.

E3 Version

Xbox ONLY!

hands on

house of the dead 3

Not an old folks home management sim, but a gory zombie shoot-'em-up.

release **october** complete

game

- **Genre** Shoot-'em-up
- **Players** 1-2
- **Movies** www.game downloads
- **Code stage** Alpha

company

- **Developer** WOW Entertainment
- **Publisher** Sega
- **Contact** 0208 [illegible] www.sega.co.uk

Enjoy having the enemy staring down your fully loaded barrel? Course you do. Line up the site, whisper "checkin' out" to the victim and—bang—gone, dead, never to return. Job's a good 'un.

Yet another Sega classic to make its way to the Xbox, *House Of The Dead 3* sees you running through yet more levels populated with the rapacious living dead. The third outing was originally developed as a cel-shaded sprite endeavour, a shocking move that received such a backlash from the press that when Sega recovered from the neck injuries they went back to hearty old 3D. Good job, too.

The setting is post-apocalyptic and evil creatures from the crypt are playing up and giving it verbals—your way. Your task? Simple. To wipe them out and dance in their gore. But you'll have to keep your eyes peeled, because these zombies attack from all sides. One minute, you're facing forward, blasting away, the

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Those dead swines. They hide everywhere, waiting for you to come by before giving you a [illegible] shock big enough to prompt instant turtlehead. Bullets are the only defence, so be quick.

1 [illegible] for you. They must get dead bored (help!).

2 They don't bother trying. Dead fools amount to this, dangling in front of you, just asking for a chundering.

3 [illegible] like a troop of angry monkeys whose bananas you've just pinched.

[illegible] with Death's rotting mush is where you should be aiming, then.

There's more blood in *House Of The Dead 3* than all of John Woo's films put together. [illegible] honey belly quivers before your eyes is quite horrible to behold, in a cartoony kinda way.

instant expert in 2 easy steps

[illegible] of the House of the Dead.

1 Bang You'll spend all your time blasting away with a shotgun and running around screaming blue murder at the enemies, who come thick and fast.

2 Chunk Unlike a cheap night-tramp, it'll take more than a tenner to get these babies going down. They take lots of shots before becoming properly dead. In the meantime, you're spattered with their innards as more ghouls shuffle up for the same treatment.

PIECE MAKERS

The best way to shoot a zombie is with a gun. Here's a glimpse of the first Xbox prototypes. Make sure you've got your trigger digits ready like you're about to stab a tortoise to death, through the shell, fingers first.

The bunnies who put the Joy in Tech are pulling this little baby out, so soon you'll be able to pop away at the screen like there's no tomorrow.

Madcatz's offering is also due out imminently–but from this image [illegible] looking like some kind of weird wrist strengthener.

house of the dead 3

next you're spun round, aiming up and shooting nasties jumping down from the roof behind you. The game controls where you run and turn. All that's left for you to handle is the pointing of the trusty shotgun and the blasting of your choice of attacker.

no arm in trying

Problem is, there's no one-shot, one-kill policy here. Let rip with a light shell and a chunk of monstrous hunk may go flying–but legs, arms and even heads are something the undead can 'live' quite happily without. You can even blow a big hole in their stomachs and chests. Great for seeing what lies behind, sure, but when a big fat zombie gets a gut full of lead, the effect is truly nauseating. All the fat around the edges of the hole jiggles about in a way that'll have you turning from the screen and puking into a hat. If you've seen any of Peter Jackson's quirky splatterfests (*Braindead*, *Bad Taste*), you'll have some idea of the sheer carnage on offer. The blood and lumps even splash onto the screen before sliding down to the floor.

No doubt *House Of The Dead 3* will be more fun with a lightgun, but already the gameplay's ageing like a badly pickled cadaver. Rapid button-hitting seems to have been given the nod over a steady hand and fast reactions. The final judgement awaits... **Dan Curley**

GAMER PREDICTS

- **Gore** If you love blood then you'll be in claret heaven with all the nasty red splashing on offer.
- **Light** Once hooked up with a lightgun, *HOD3* will offer real shooting thrills–particularly with the two-player zombie mow-down mode.
- **Corpse** It's just relentless wave after wave of baddies coming forward. Not much skill required to dismember them.
- **Dead** It seems dated enough to be six feet under.

With a shooter and all the levels finished this might perk up, but at heart the gameplay is long in the tooth and short in the lifespan. CAUTION

House Of The Dead 3_**Verdict in the December issue**

I'LL DO YOU A DEAL, MATE...

There are 21 Lamborghinis in all, from the rare to the scare. You can test-drive them at the start on the Lamborghini test track, but to buy and drive in the races you need to unlock them first (and earn the dosh to afford them).

1 The Countach may look tracky out it's still a right little mover.

2 This Diablo is much nippier. It's a noisy beggar, too.

3 The Miura? Looks like a Batmobile—but yellow.

4 This award-winning super-car goes over 200mph. Smart.

SPLIT BENDS

There's loads of different ways you can enjoy multiplayer *Lamborghini*, but if you've not got a LAN posse to link up with, or will never own broadband, then simply pick the multiplayer options and let the screen split-to-bits for you. (Not recommended on your mam's diddy 14-incher, tho'...)

The two-player mode is still silky smooth and looks superb. Just check out that broad two-screen split and sup on the shimmering atmospherics.

The frame rate drops a touch when four drivers cluster round, but this four-player option will keep the LAN and Live-lacking pundits pure chirpy.

BLUR!

Nothing to do with Damon Albarn. When you hit the 200mph mark, a blur effect kicks in that gives you the sensation you're driving, and bloody fast, indeed. Things go a little fuzzy at the edges, and the screen goes a little blurry. Very nice.

hands on

lamborghini

All aboard. It's time to join the flash git express club and smash up a brand new Lambo—it's all the Rage, you know...

release march 03 complete

How many times have you argued with your mates about which is the best car in the world (and which one you'd own when you grew up)? Lamborghinis, Ferraris and Porsches were all top trumps, even though the closest 99.99% of us will ever get to being a playboy is driving the old man's Capri, spinning a football rattle out of the window while screaming, "Championee!" Now, thanks to Rage, you can fulfil your childhood dreams—so long as they were about playing a Lambo game on Xbox, that is...

Lamborghini, as the name suggests, is a high-speed racing game where you drive the playboy's favourite toy like a hare running in a spaceship's slipstream. You're a member of an exclusive racing club for millionaires, filled to the brim with flash swines who can afford the finest things in life (pub, curry *and* a cab every night). The designers haven't decided yet how your character comes to be wiping his arse on tenners (could be

game

- **Genre** Street racer
- **Players** 1-4/2-8 LAN & Xbox Live
- **Movies** not yet
- **Code stage** Pre-Alpha

company

- **Developer** Rage
- **Publisher** Rage
- **Contact** 0151 237 2200 www.rage.com

GLOBE TROTTING

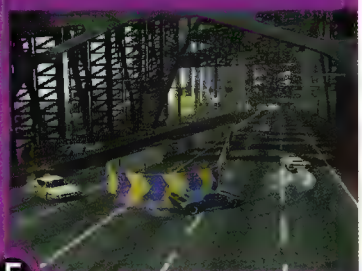
In keeping with a millionaire's lifestyle, you'll be travelling the world taking in glorious locations. Excluding Minehead.

1 Hong Kong. The gleaming jewel in the Asian crown. Recognise any of these buildings? No? Why not?

2 The city of Angels: thrash down the highway and look up the Pacific. No South Central tracks, though.

3 The mighty Colosseum. It's where Russell Crowe killed an evil emperor millions of years ago, you know.

4 Go to France and race around the streets of Paris. Look, we didn't mention onions. Not once.



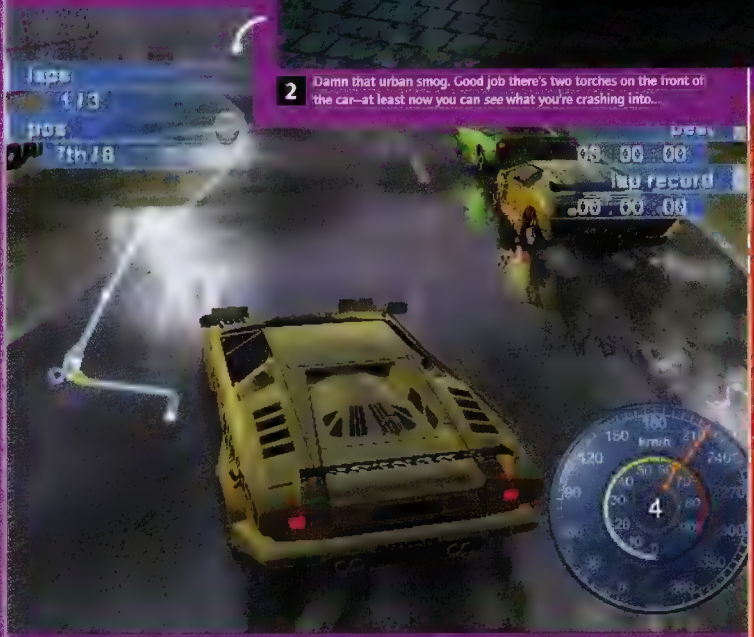
5 It's the Sydney Harbour Bridge, recreated to perfection to enable some dead fast driving. Champion.

KILL THE WEATHER MAN

"There'll be slight cloud, fog, poor visibility, blazing sunshine, torrential rain..."

1 Fog, not iffy visuals, limit your view. You'll crash more.

2 Damn that urban smog. Good job there's two torches on the front of the car—at least now you can see what you're crashing into...



3 There's nowt like a spot of rain to make the road nice and skiddy. Might be best to slow down, to say, 190mph. While you're at it, check out that lovely reflective sheen effect before you hydrofoil into the side-barriers.

instant expert in 3 easy steps

How to become the playboy with the biggest willy in dead easy chunks of words.

- **Mint** Your bank balance is so big you'll be beating the ladies off with a couple of big sticks. You can lose money, but try not to.
- **Lambos** Nothing do with a little baby sheep's journey from mother to kebab skewer, but rocket cars that can move fast, like a chubby fella falling out of a plane.
- **World** You'll travel all over the place taking in sites, jumping in puddles and eating weird, foreign waffles for breakfast.

lamborghini

anything from a lottery win to having invented a tremendous gravy recipe), but you start off with more dosh than Bill and a single "bog-standard" Lambo in your garage. The main game is the championship, which comprises six increasingly difficult class seasons. Starting off in the V8 class, you must work your way through each season until you reach the monster fast (and monster hard) Murcielago class.

wealth hazard

Each season is structured simply enough. With 15 other rich pigs, you roam the world, racing each other for points. The V8 series has four race meetings in all, each one kicking off with a qualifying lap to determine your position on the grid. The line-up is then broken down into two races of eight cars, you race, and the top four from each go into the final. Then it's simply a case of ten points for first, nish for eighth. You still go on to the next race meeting even if you come last, but by the end of the season you'll need to be in the top three in the points table to open up the next season. To cap off each race meeting, one of the other characters offers you a one-on-one race for dosh. You can up the stakes (confident?), drop the stakes (wimp) or simply tell them politely to sod off, but your wallet will get fatter if you gamble (and win), leading you to the better cars sooner.

Once you progress to the next season, the bottom four computer characters are lost and four new drivers join in. You can even enter a pink slip bet at the end of each season and gamble for a faster car. Admittedly, it's a big risk—they could be driving a souped-up V12 and you a relatively chuntering V8, for example—but if you do win, you'll bag a V12 for nothing. Bargain.

At any point in the game you can visit the Lamborghini factory and buy any of the 21 cars on show—or rather, any of the cars that you can actually afford. Once you've shelled out the

PAIN BARRIER These fellas tell you which way to go. Damn useful, because sometimes you've got just seconds to react between seeing them and smacking into 'em.

RIVALS The other cars remember if you've been a pain in the arse. Cause an individual more hassle then the others and they'll be all over you like a cheap suit.

SPEEDO Always handy for telling you how fast you're going. When in first-person, there are two dials (speed and revs). They look like a pair of wobbly blue breasts.

[illegible] Three views—two external, one first-person—are provided. It feels faster in first-person, but you can't see your car, so you might as well be in a Cortina.

hands on

Xbox LIVE
Race against your next door neighbour without leaving the house, or even someone in New York. *Lamborghini* will be going online next year.

green, your car then appears in your garage, a vast showroom of wealth and style where you also store trophies. Damaged cars are repaired here and can even be put up for sale on an idle whim.

lambo live

Lamborghini feels beautiful to drive. The impression of speed is second only to the ludicrously fast *Quantum Redshift*; while anyone who prefers their steel real will find it much more up their street. The handling isn't realistic, but it's a joy to the touch and the way the cars crumple really looks the business (huge respect to Lamborghini for allowing this to happen). The handbrake system is superb, too. Just one little tap and you can scream around bends at outrageous speeds, almost go-kart like, but at 200mph. And while it's really easy to pick up and play, it'll take plenty of practice before you start pulling off handbrake skids on U-bends and nabbing those top prizes.

Better still, *Lamborghini* will be going Live. You'll be able to race with seven other people via broadband, and Rage is hoping (it can't say for sure just yet) that you'll be able to store your garage online and even gamble for cars. Sounds top. Fingers crossed the team can pull it off.

Expect great things. **Dan Curley**

GAMER PREDICTS

- **Whizz** Mega-fast impression of speed will leave you feeling like a hoovered-up jellyfish.
- **Lucre** Top gambling mode will have you screaming blue murder at the computer characters when you lose.
- **Views** Ten racing locations are magnificently recreated.
- **Wired** Tremendous online racing with the mooted Xbox Live.
- **Tracked** Some tracks reused with only another extra road or two.

Lamborghini and *Quantum Redshift* share the front of the field for high-speed racing thrills, so it'll be a close finish either way.

HIT!

Lamborghini **Won't see the light of day until next year**

THE DEVELOPER SPEAKS!
SELF DEFENCE

XGamer: Why is *Lamborghini* better than watching a dog mounting a dead dog, thinking it was alive? Richard Badger, Producer of *Lamborghini* said: "Wanna be a high rolling playboy millionaire? This game gives you the chance to be just that. Drive the fastest and most beautiful cars. Travel round the world to exotic locations racing Lambos, gambling for huge sums of money—and even cars. Build the finest collection of Lamborghinis. Take your collection online with Xbox Live, show 'em off and be the best in the world. With blisteringly fast and detailed graphics, we believe this game is the first true next-gen racing title."

myst III: exile

Brain too large? Then this is guaranteed to leave you with tanglier ganglia.

release **september 27** complete

If you're a "true" gamer, then you'll know that *Myst* has had a pretty bad press. It's the best-seller that you and your mates have never played, even though your grandad got a copy when he finally succumbed and bought a computer. Like *Minesweeper* and *The Sims*, *Myst* is one of those titles enjoyed by people who wouldn't ever mention that they played "computer games".

It's created in the style of an old-fashioned graphic adventure, with you navigating a collection of rooms and exteriors illustrated by pre-rendered CG images. Each time you "move", perhaps by clicking on a door or ladder, the picture changes to show your new location. The backdrops may be static but are often enhanced with video sequences and animation, and at least *Exile*'s new wraparound images better simulate the effect of a 360-degree panorama.

In essence, though, gameplay is simply a sequence of tough logic and lateral-thinking puzzles. You're trapped inside a fantasy realm comprised of complex machines and obstacles: by trying out gears and levers, or hunting for clues scattered about, you can slowly unlock the mechanisms that will open up a gateway to the next realm.

The long-standing problem with the *Myst* games is that their attractive slideshow environments often undermine your puzzle-solving with acres of intricate but irrelevant detail. While the likes of *Resident Evil* telegraph their interactive hot-spots with a tell-tale sparkle, *Exile*'s hot-spots only show up when *and if* you highlight them with the cursor. Thus, it's remarkably easy to be staring at a screen you've seen many times over but still miss a vital switch or exit that's absolutely necessary to proceed.

This conversion from PC also continues a worrying trend of late by including the original's text fonts and icons, intended for high-resolution monitors. Let's hope they optimise the graphics for a home television screen before release, because some of the notebook clues in this beta version were completely illegible.

Still, it's hard to beat that feeling of intellectual satisfaction when you do finally crack a conundrum—without any assistance, of course—and watch the cogs rolling to unlock another door. Enough to offset the hours of wandering, chin-scratching and screaming? Well, only you can answer that... **Zy Nicholson**

status: exposed

GAMER PREDICTS

A thorough cerebral work-out, sure, but does *Exile* really qualify as a game or is it just a compendium of brain-teasers?

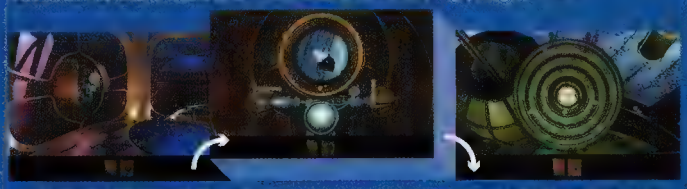
TRICKY

game
- Genre [illegible]
- Players 1
- Movies [illegible]
- Code stage Beta

company
- Developer Cyan Studios
- Publisher [illegible]
- Contact [illegible]

STUMPITY-STUMPED?

Your fingers certainly will be, after you've chewed them off in neurone-knotting frustration at one of those brick wall/brain scenarios. Help (cough)... Me.



1 Okay, let's have another look at the round window. If I...

2 ...align this viewfinder's image to match the one outside...

3 ...I can take readings for that lock I saw earlier. Got it!

I thought a lot about innocence these last few years

WWE Raw

Is it a case of too little too late for the long-delayed US grappler going Brit-side?

release **october** complete

Bit of a funny one, this. Xbox's first ever WWE (formerly WWF) experience isn't due to hit these shores until October and yet it's been out in the US since February. The import version scored a distinctly ho-hum 5/10 (**XGamer 03**), but what can we expect from the PAL version? Well, to be honest, more of the same. As in *exactly the same*.

Yup, THQ has finally owned up to the fact that, although gamers in the UK will have to wait an extra eight months to get their paws on *Raw*, the game won't be updated to compensate for the delay. For most non-licensed games, this wouldn't matter a jot, but in the fast-moving world of the WWE, eight months is a long time and you can't help but feel that THQ is really pushing its luck in releasing such a dated title.

Still, the fact that the likes of the long-departed Steve Austin, K-Kwik and Justin "Who?" Credible are featured doesn't actually detract from the gameplay itself, with the simple aim being to pummel your opponents to such a degree that you're able to pin their shoulders to the mat for a count of three.

It's the sort of thing that—in theory, at least—lends itself perfectly to videogame conversion. Except that *Raw* doesn't quite manage to pull it off. The game was originally touted as a more sim-based "adult" affair compared to the PlayStation's *SmackDown!* series, but there's little evidence of this. Indeed, there's an airy feel to the controls, no real sense of inflicting damage on your opponent and scant variety between the modes.

True, the characters themselves are pleasingly solid, and there's a quirky selection of weapons to collect, but, otherwise, this is by-the-numbers wrestling at its most banal. Unless developer Anchor Inc reworks the game for the European market (which is unlikely considering work is already underway on *Raw 2*), then the best place for *Raw* will be up its own ring. Xbox deserves better. **Oliver Hurley**

status: exposed

GAMER PREDICTS

Failing a massive revamp in time for its UK release, we're not expecting this to be anything more than crushingly average.

ALARM!

game

Code stage Pre-submission

company

Developer

Publisher

Contact

KICK HIM IN THE 'NADS

Four-player anything-goes matches are one of the game's best bits

1 2 3

There are no backstage areas to fight in—just the ring or aisle

silent hill 2: inner fears

Think *Twin Peaks* meets *Resident Evil*, then chuck in a bucket of vomit. Stir and serve.

release **september** complete

game

- **Genre** Survival horror
- **Players** 1
- **Movies** www.silenthill2.de/auswahl.html
- **Code stage** Beta

company

- **Developer** Konami
- **Publisher** Konami
- **Contact** 0208 582 5573

Like a headless zombie dragging its heavy entrails, *Silent Hill 2* is finally set to scare UK Xbox owners in its latest incarnation, *Inner Fears*. A healthy conversion of *Restless Dreams* (**XGamer 01**, 8/10), the game casts you as James Sutherland on a quest to find his dead wife, following instructions left in a hastily scrawled final letter.

Fans of the PlayStation original will be familiar with the gameplay and atmosphere of this survival horror: replete with puzzle-solving and hack 'n' slash action against entities freakish, half-seen and invariably undead. Mashed corpses with side-gore, sir? No problem. Terrifying moments to savour, enhanced by moody, jittery visuals and scary sound effects? Can do.

Superior graphics, which have been ramped up further for this European Xbox release, ensure that *Inner Fears* is already looking better than its stripped down PS2 counterpart. A six-hour mini-game, in which you play Maria, a secondary character from the main quest, has also been included. Although there is sadly no sign of the mooted DVD extras on the PAL preview version we've been given—our sources had suggested an eerie 'Making Of' video would accompany the main action. Still, it plays very well, even if it has been far too long in coming.

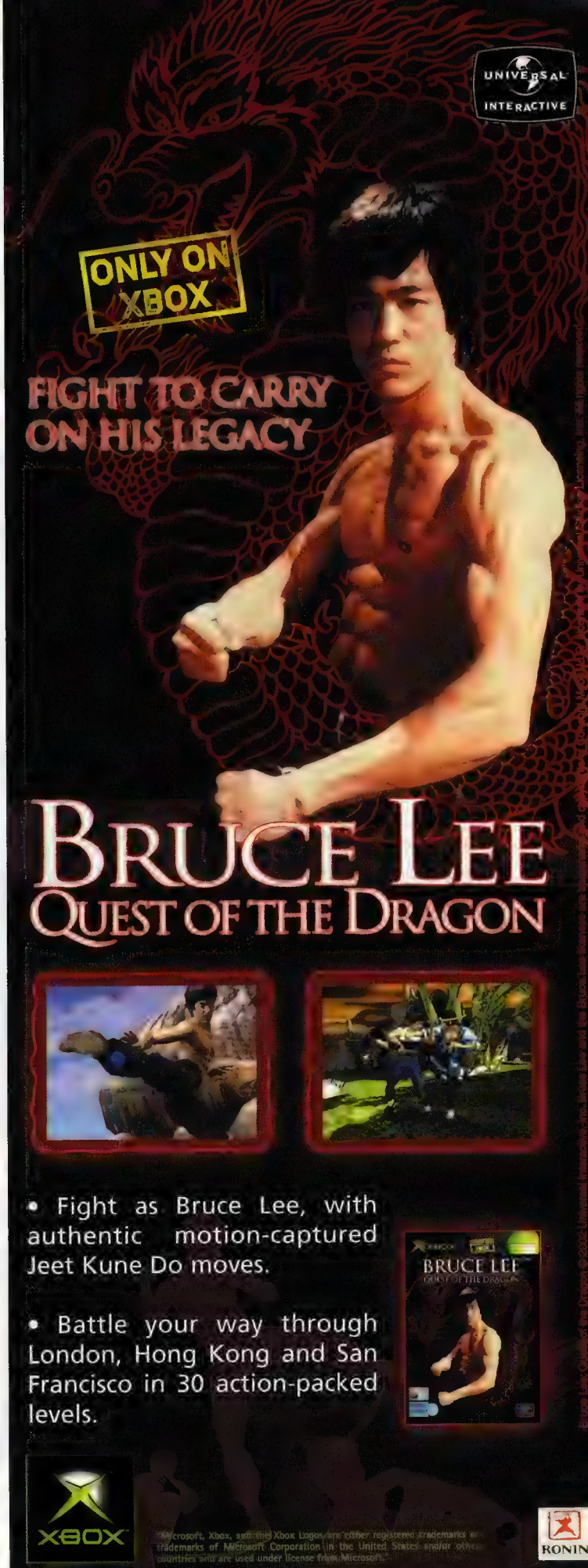
We're expecting *Inner Fears*, which is the first survival horror to hit Xbox, to hook everyone. Check out our review next issue. **Lee Hall**

XGAMER PREDICTS

It looks darned similar to the US version, but here's a game that will have you clutching your ticker with glee *and* horror.

HIT!

Maria, a late-night entertainer at a local club, is as vicious with a meat cleaver as her male rival is with a big plank of wood.



they reek of the truth

reviews

WARNING! CASH FLOW DANGER AHEAD

Take evasive action. Never buy a game until you've read **XGamer**'s swine-strangling reviews.

select

42 **TUROK EVOLUTION**
The dinosaur hunter's charging in for the kill with his first Xbox safari. He fared reasonably well.

48 **AGGRESSIVE INLINE**
Not an angry opposite to online, but roaming around town like Tony Hawk on roller blades.

50 **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM**
An essential feast of sand, action and shooting, perfectly timed for the imminent war that's about to break out in Iraq.

54 **BRUCE LEE QUEST OF THE DRAGON**
A diseased beat-'em-up and a shocking insult to the man. Let's hope his ghost comes back and karate chops the developers to death.

56 **PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR**
It's tennis, but sweatier than Tim Henman's jockstrap after six hours of ball batting.

57 Antz Extreme Racing

IMPORT ONLY

58 **SPLASHDOWN**
Jet-ski laughs for all the family. Well worth a look if you like water (without actually getting wet).

60 **TETRIS WORLDS**
A complete mockery of the original. If you see it, hit it with a bloody big stick and thereafter avoid it.

61 World Series Baseball

TUROK EVOLUTION 42

NTSC Vs PAL

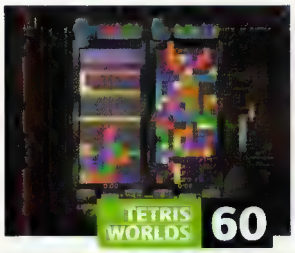
US or Japanese code reviewed in order to get a timely report to you. Major changes before PAL release are rare. But we will keep you fully informed if they do occur.

European releases are all PAL code. If publishers delay PAL review copies then we will review NTSC in order to give you an accurate picture of a game before purchase.

AGGRESSIVE INLINE 48

MISSED XGAMER? Then brush your eyes over the Hit List on page 62 for quick verdicts on every Xbox game.

SPLASHDOWN 58



TETRIS WORLDS 60

ANTZ EXTREME RACING 57

PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR 56

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 61

BRUCE LEE: QUEST OF THE DRAGON 54

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 50

20 HOT AND HORNY REVIEW PAGES!

HOW WE RATE...

To make our review verdicts as clear as possible we use a 0 - 10 scoring system. On the **XGamer** scale 0 is pure evil and 10 is sheer genius. Want to know more? Here's the complete guideline...

10 An act of God. It'll change the way you think about gaming.

9 A benchmark buster. So good you'll never want to put it down.

8 Excellent, a must play. Games this good are few and far between.

7 Worthy, but lacks that certain something. Still enjoyable though.

6 Fun at times but spoilt by a few glaring errors, worth renting.

5 Bland, unoriginal, flawed or mediocre.

4 Hampered by serious gameplay defects.

3 Unbelievable and uninvolving. Crap.

2 An insult to the Xbox. It makes us angry.

1 No, no, no. "Step away from the game!"

0 It's not a game. It's a criminal offence.

XGAMER REVIEWS POLICY

HONESTY

We're honest. That's it.

Sometimes you'll disagree with our reviews (and if you do, tell us about it), but all reviews are ultimately subjective. XGamer uses the best videogame journalists in the business. They're the best because they're people with strong opinions on games. Passionate, experienced, pioneering gamers. Gamers like you.

VERSIONS

We'll always tell you what version of a game we're reviewing. Imported games from the US and Japan will be marked as NTSC and we'll review those only when PAL (or European) code is unavailable.

REVIEW CODE

Publishers provide us with pre-submission game code to review. Games at this stage are awaiting final approval from Microsoft and are usually a few weeks from release. It is standard magazine practice to review at this stage (only no one else will tell you about it), to ensure the reviews appear in the shops before the games do. Publishing a review after you've bought the game is no service to anyone. We only review this early code when we receive assurances from the game's publishers that only minor, cosmetic changes remain to be made to the game before release. If there are any score-altering differences between the code that we review and the final retail version, you can be sure we'll tell you about it and name and shame the publishers involved.

JUST GAMES

We love videogames. If you want to read about music, comics, DVDs or books go somewhere else—we'll stick to what we're good at.

THE VERDICT BOX...

You'll have read the review, but... hmm... that's not entirely satisfying is it? What's needed is a handy digest of the conclusions. Something to round it off like a lovely choccy mint after a curry. Et voilà!

XRATED Your guarantee that the game's been played to the limits of human endurance.

Gameplay The meat of the matter. It may look and sound great, but is it actually challenging and fun too?

Graphics We want games to look great *and* play well too. Not too much to ask of an Xbox, is it?

Overall Rating The important bit. All the parts, sifted, argued, discussed and decided upon.

Accessibility Need a degree in astrophysics to play this? Or can you just pick it up and have a laff?

Depth Will you swap it in a week? Or will you still treasure it in the old folk's home?

Reviewer's Hi-score Proof that we've been through hell to get you an honest review. Beat us if you can...

XGamer Verdict The good, the bad and the ugly neatly summed up in a pithy sentence.

DO NOT MISS...

HIT LIST The entire Xbox line up kicked or licked so you can see which games demand your dosh. Check the verdicts on page 62.

MONTHLY MINGER *Pro Tennis WTA Tour* is proper crap. Why people make such horrors, we do not know. Page 56.

MANNING THE KEYBOARD OF JUSTICE...

MARK DONALD
Specialist in Shooters
Loves Watching Newcastle United scoring goals and scoring a kiss off a tidy lady

LEE HALL
Specialist in Sports
Loves Newcastle United kicking superbly and kicking ugly meat out of his bed

DAN CURLEY
Specialist in Falling over
Loves Manchester United bagging a hat-trick and using his trick hat to cop an old bag

ZY NICHOLSON
Specialist in Slipper fights
Loves Accrington Stanley getting a touch and using his Stanley on his plastic love toy

JIM MCCAULEY
Specialist in Floating
Loves Grimsby Town winning the ball and getting grim at a ball with anything that lives

AL BICKHAM
Specialist in Hangman
Loves Sheffield Wednesday's dribbling ace and using a field to have a good dribble

TUROK EVOLUTION

And the so-called 'experts' think it was a big meteor ploughing into the ocean that wiped out the dinos. Heh-heh, what do they know?

FLOWERY!
XGAMER FAVE BIT
Discovering that The Lost World is jam-packed with a bewildering variety of flora and fauna. Close the curtains, turn up the sound and listen to the crickets chirrup and the foliage squeak as you sneak through it.

On sale
Friday 6 September

game

- **Price** £39.99
- **Genre** First-person shooter
- **Players** 1-4
- **Supports** Dolby Digital
- **Version** PAL
- **Movies** www.turok.com/evolution/movies/index.html

company

- **Developer** Acclaim
- **Publisher** Acclaim
- **Contact** 0207 344 5000 www.acclaim.com

He's in your sights, this most mighty of beasts, quietly munching away on a patch of antediluvian ferns—and he has absolutely no idea of the cruel trick fate is about to play. You crouch in the undergrowth, carefully notch an arrow, slowly draw back the bowstring and hold it there, forearm burning with the sustained tension. The beast shifts position, lazily swinging his huge tail. Stegosaurus may be a docile creature, but one swipe of that menacing, spike-studded muscle-mace must surely spell disembowelment.

And then the opportunity presents itself. Steggy lifts his tail, you adjust your aim—and let fly. Pop! Right up the jenkins.

Cackle. You scamper off into the bushes, chortling slyly to yourself, while your quarry trumpets his anal distress to an uncaring world. Deal with it, Stega-sore-arse.

ONE SWIPE MUST SURELY SPELL DISEMBOWELMENT

Forgive me. That was a cruel, cruel thing, but it had to be done. For *Turok Evolution* thrusts you into a world of such prolific and diverse flora and fauna, you immediately want to go and mix with it. And this being a first-person shooter, there's only one real way of interacting with things. By killing them—or at least trying to. Besides, shooting things up the bum is pure comedy. It's all part of being British. You'll love it.

LOST AND FOUND

The prehistoric world that native American warrior Tal'set (the soon-to-be legendary Turok) has been catapulted into is one bristling with life. It'll enchant and delight you from the outset. Playful gazelles gambol and graze. Squat Anklyosaurs wiffle through the undergrowth, their little ones in tow. Brightly plumed parakeets alight in the trees, only to dart off again, startled at your approach. Prehistoric palms wave to unseen breezes, and the undergrowth squeaks and rustles as you push through it. It's a lush, detailed place—and a real joy to explore.

But it's the larger inhabitants of The Lost World that really catch your eye. Quite early on, you find yourself rounding a corner to see something large and curvy in the distance. As you draw closer, you're confronted with a couple of Brachiosaurs, standing in a

QUICK START

You've played *Halo*, haven't you? Then what are you waiting for? Weapon yourself up and ravage dino...

TWITCH Aiming your weapons is a bit odd to begin with, given the rather twitchy nature of the controls. Engage auto-aim and experiment with the sensitivity settings to minimise your miss-rate.

HACK ATTACK Get used to using the axe first. It's your absolute base-line weapon. Quick taps for fast, light strikes, and hold it down for a mega-Sleg-a-chop-chop.

CREEP SHOW Move slowly around behind Slegs for the optimal stealth approach. They won't hear you if you creep, and an axe in the back of the head is a silent takedown.

TRANQUIL You'll see some glorious scenes in *Turok Evolution*. They may not quite hit *Halo*'s visual heights, but they're still gorgeous.

STEGGY STARDUST Dinosaurs! Big. Real. Eating. Dumping. Yep, they excrete as they walk. Amazing what they can do nowadays.

THE ENEMY He's well hidden and far off, but that won't stop him taking a pop at you. Make an' da bow and teach him the meaning of pain.

PALM OFF Pop a shot at an innocent palm tree, and you'll hear a splintering wrench before it crashes to the floor in a flurry of trunk and leaf.

100 15

LEVEL_INTO THE JUNGLE
0HRS:7MINS:22SECS
SCENE Your first foray into The Lost World.
ATMOSPHERE Discovery, wonder, awe.

IN THE HEAD, SON

LEVEL_MOUNTAIN ASCENT
1HR:12MINS:39SECS

SCENE Deep in Sleg-held territory.
MISSION Crest the mountain, enter the Sleg stronghold. But not the Sleg.
TENSION High.

POP A close-range shotgun shell to the upper body will make meaty Shreddies out of a Sleg. See if you can spot his lunch...

HIGH GROUND In territory such as this mountainside, snipers are a constant threat from on high. Tread carefully.

BIG DROP Run over the edge here and it's a *looong* way down... Avoid, unless you want to give those dinos Turok omelette for brekky.

BARRELLING When you've found the shotgun upgrade, you can load up and loose off four barrels at once. Hello splatterville.

28 12

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

The lost world is a wondrous, fecund place, packed to the treetops and beyond with all manner of creatures, both benign and malevolent. Naturally, you can attack them all, mashing friend and foe in a mindless orgy of blood, bone and viscera. Heh.

[illegible] feel a little guilty about such amoral carnage—and rightly so. Sure, there are some genuinely evil for [illegible] creatures in the world which will attack in seconds—and you should have no qualms about sending such adversaries straight to hell. But others have no worse intention than sniffing your crotch and ululating softly...

It's a funny thing. As you begin to understand [illegible] maker, you start to feel a bit like an avenging angel, killing the guilty to protect the innocent. And [illegible] or monkey you explode grotesquely with gunpowder arrows begins to weigh a little heavier on your soul... It's an odd sensation. This is a game, after all; it's not real. But after a while you begin to dig the fantasy and play out Turok's role with something amounting to [illegible] try shooting the tiny tree-frogs in level two. Just take it from us, those little bodies must be under [illegible]

[illegible] even flinched. Sorry? Eco-friendly? Course I am. This is just for demonstration purposes, you understand.

lake, reaching up with their crane-like necks to nibble methodically at tasty treetop buds. It really is a breathtaking sight—just like that moment in *Jurassic Park* when Sam Neill spots his first living, breathing Brontosaurus. A real sense of discovery.

To begin with, the big herbivores aren't that aggressive—presumably to lead you into the game gently. You can jump on their tails, bash their clopping plates of meat with your axe—even ping arrows at their heads. But you'll soon tire trying to get a reaction out of these mindless, hulking automata. It's a bootless venture. Although, upon swimming under a Brachiosaur's belly, I did have a brief moment of panic when it squatted down, trapping me underwater for a spell 'til my air began to run out. In later levels, though, the leaf-eaters do find a streak of self-preservation and defiance. An errant arrow will get you a clomp round the noggin and a beaky nibble, so you do have to start treading more carefully. But leave them be and they'll simply ignore you.

PLATES OF MEAT

The carnivores, however, are a different story altogether. You'll be working through head-high undergrowth, when suddenly you'll be confronted by a trio of velociraptors crowing to each other a scant metre from your face. And then the chase is on. You'll also be jumped by ferocious little tykes such as Compsagnathus, a chicken-sized nipper who happily belies his ickle stature by darting in for a mouthful of thigh-meat. Screeching prehistoric mandrills, who have a tendency to gang up and attack en masse, are also on your kill-on-sight hitlist. Admittedly, the smaller beasts aren't a real threat, but they're still fast and hard to hit.

Turok Evolution features a wicked multiplayer mode, supporting up to four players. Ace weapons, loads of modes, top fun.

No, it's the upper echelons of the food chain you *really* need to worry about. Your first encounter with the mighty Tyrannosaurus Rex, for instance, is a fearful experience. He doesn't notice you at first—he's too busy tearing strips off a young Bronto-corpse to care—but step closer and he whirls about with terrifying speed, before pounding towards *you*, his next hot lunch. Better make sure you're packing explosive-tipped arrows at this stage.

Your main foes, however, are the Slegs. These half-man, half-lizard overlords of The Lost World are hell-bent on your capture. They're cruel, they're ugly—and great fun to kill. Why? Because you can make a real mess of them. A carefully aimed arrow can lop heads, arms or legs clean off, leaving a gushing corpse to drop to the floor. Run up close with axe in hand, whack the trigger repeatedly, and you'll pare a Sleg down to the torso, like some blood-crazed Gordon Ramsey de-flippering a monkfish. But the best fun you'll have is with poison arrows. Hammer

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

It's not all shoot, shoot, shoot. *Turok Evolution* also features sequences where you pilot a Pteranodon through hostile territory, complete with wing-mounted cannons and rockets. And there's you thinking the only good dino was a dead dino.

Herd those stampeding dinosaurs. Well, that's not exactly what we're doing, but it feels that way. The Sleg military machine has scared them from their natural habitat and they're on the move...

Air-to-air combat plays a big part in *Turok Evolution*. It can get mighty tricky, too, with low-hanging branches and static tree-mounted turrets to contend with. Still, dogfighting through dense forests is tense and enjoyable.

A delicate gazelle—viewed through the

BEAST OF A GAME

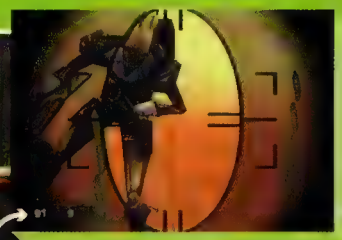
HALO
9/10, XGAMER 01
The game that needs no introduction. The finest FPS on any system.

TUROK EVOLUTION

SPEW ON THAT

Poison arrows. Pure comedy. See what happens when they take effect on this unfortunate fella.

1 Target located. He's a distance away, so when he fires at us, his aim'll be poor.



2 After a growl of outrage and a couple of badly aimed shots, he feels the burn.

3 *Blaa-vooey!* Old Sleggy boy just can't stop himself, chundering up a whole heap of dino-gunk. Give the man a Kleenex. Or, better still, a shot to the head to put him out for good.

LEVEL_INTO THE JUNGLE
0HRS:22MINS:44SECS

SCENE Rendezvous with allied Pteranodon pilot.
MISSION Still trying to break into the Sleg stronghold.
VIBE High anxiety.

OBJECTIVE Your pilot is waiting just across that spit of land. When you get there, she'll teach you how to fly a leathery bird-beast.

WICKETT It's a long way down, warrior. Mind your step, eh? One false move here and it's a mountain-side slide down to a messy end.

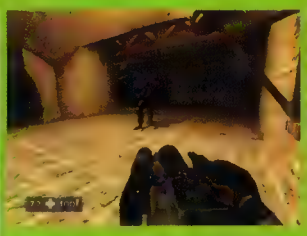
GRAND SCALE You've just climbed up from here. *Turok Evolution* has no problem with huge environments, which really adds to the atmos.

DISTANCE WORK You're about to happen upon a Sleg patrol. This sneaky sniper pistol is the perfect tool for the job.

100 94

YOU DIRTY SLEG

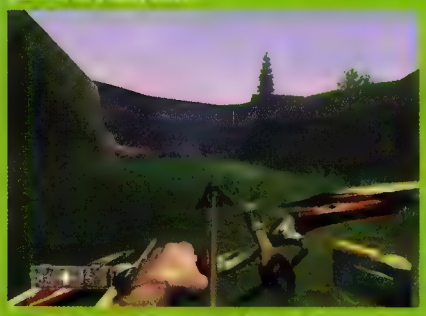
BUGGER
A heavily-armoured Sleg rounds the corner and we're low on flechette ammo. Time for a rapid change, methinks.



SECRET WEAPON
A tap of the left trigger and the weapon whirrs, clicks, then slides apart to reveal three barrels.

MINCEMEAT
It takes a couple of seconds to spin up, but the new-born minigun can shred any foe in seconds. Goodbye, Sleg.

TYRANNOSAURUS FLECKS



1

2

3

4

5

one home and your Sleg quarry will totter, drop his weapon, clutch his gut, fall to his knees and retch up foul puddles of fibrous green vom. Gribbly as hell, but it's a sight you'll never quite tire of.

GUT-PUNCHER The basic weapons are the axe and bow—not much cop when you're facing down creatures with jaw-spans wider than your upper body, but they still have their part to play. First, they teach you that even when you've no big guns, you can still get by. Second, you learn the truly versatile nature of the bow. It's accurate at range, does a decent amount of damage and, when you upgrade it to the tek bow (sniper sight and all), it suddenly becomes a valuable first-strike weapon. Poison and explosive-tipped arrows broaden its remit further still. All right, it's not perfect for every beastie you face, and you wouldn't want to go up against ten Slegs armed with nothing else, but more than any other weapon, it's one you'll return to time and again without fail.

Still, when things do get hairy, you'll need more than a slow-loading piece of willow. It's like that bit in *Jaws* when Roy Scheider claps eyes on his toothy nemesis and utters the immortal line: "We need a bigger boat."—a bit further into the fray and you'll start wishing your gun-cupboard was a little less Miss Hubbard, too.

Fortunately, your arsenal does burgeon—in ways you can't imagine. Where *Halo*'s weapons are simple, focused, perfect for certain situations but pants for others, *Turok*'s are about as subtle as a fart in a library, and several orders of magnitude louder. There are also tons of them and, better still, they all have secondary (in some cases, tertiary) functions. The pistol gets a sniper scope, the shotgun gets a multi-barrel upgrade, grenades can be used as mines... You get the picture. Suffice to say, ammo-hunting is one of your chief activities.

One of your staple weapons (no pun intended) is the flechette rifle. It's probably the most understated you'll get—it quietly coughs out razor-sharp shrapnel chunks at a decent rate, but it's simply devastating. And just wait 'til you get the minigun upgrade for it. Tap your alternative-fire button and it slides apart to reveal three rotating barrels. This behemoth pumps out rounds like water, making it the perfect room-clearance device.

ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR And if it's a touch of the spectacular you're after, *Turok*'s definitely your game. Take the dark matter cube. This neat little device is thrown like a grenade, creating a teeny tiny black hole which warps the very fabric of reality—and it looks bloody great. Likewise, the flamethrower creates an incredible shimmering heat-haze as you coat areas with napalm. In short, you can deal death in varied and dramatic ways, which gets a big thumbs up. There are just too many weapons to list here, and, frankly, you'll have more fun discovering the likes of the grotesque cerebral bore for yourself.

So, let's tot it all up: It looks great, feels great and with its cinematic score and gorgeous ambient effects, it really sounds the part, too. But if you're after originality, prepare to be disappointed. Despite some neat level design and stunning environments, *Turok Evolution* is built on the standard shooter template—relentless gunplay and a few keys 'n' doors puzzles. And the points where you have to clue-hunt around the same level for half an hour after clearing all the baddies out (yup, there *are* a few of them) are as tedious as hell.

So despite the industrial light and magic on offer, this is a bread-and-butter shooter at heart, with all the basic trappings—stealth bits, sniping bits, out-and-out firefights, ammo-management and progression through level exploration. But, hey, that doesn't make it a *bad* game—on the contrary, it's a big old adventure which provides hours of escapist blasting. It's packed to the horns with beautifully realised creatures and it's good fun, too. Just don't expect the next *Halo*. **Al Bickham**

RATED TUROK EVOLUTION

Graphics 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Beautiful, but many textures lack detail.

Gameplay 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
You've played it before—but not with guns like this.

Accessibility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Go on. Dive in.

Depth 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
A big game, but it's no deep thinker.

7

GAMER VERDICT Huge, detailed, pretty and fun, but expect to be frustrated at points.

Reviewer's hi-score > **7 head shots** in 36 seconds

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

Never grind the bollards—here comes a worthy contender to clip the Hawkster's wings.

On sale
Saturday 31 August

game

- **Price** £39.99
- **Genre** Extreme sports
- **Players** 1-2
- **Supports** Memory unit, Dolby Digital
- **Version** NTSC
- **Movie** www.acclaimmaxsports.com/aggressiveinline/movies/index.html

company

- **Developer** Z-Axis
- **Publisher** Acclaim
- **Contact** 0207 344 5000 www.acclaimuk.com

The anarchic, street-shredding freedom of *Tony Hawk's 3* now looks tamer than a traffic warden's teabreak compared to the aggressive, rip-roaring disregard for public property whipped up by Acclaim's snarling new inline skater.

In the hotly contested battle for street cool, *Aggressive Inline* doesn't so much attempt to take Tony on at his own game, but bend him over a barrel and commit unspeakable acts, pounding relentlessly to a ska beat. Like Suggs and co, this is madness.

Choosing from an initial line-up of 12 skaters that include such established experts in the field as Sam Fogarty and Franky Morales—plus fictitious, amply-charmed goddesses like Jordan and Chrissy—you set about flicking the beaver to the establishment by caning eight varied stages, each one staggeringly expansive and peppered with genuine challenges. Tasks include collecting a certain number of objects, uncovering new areas and racking up points within a time limit set by one of the game's many inhabitants.

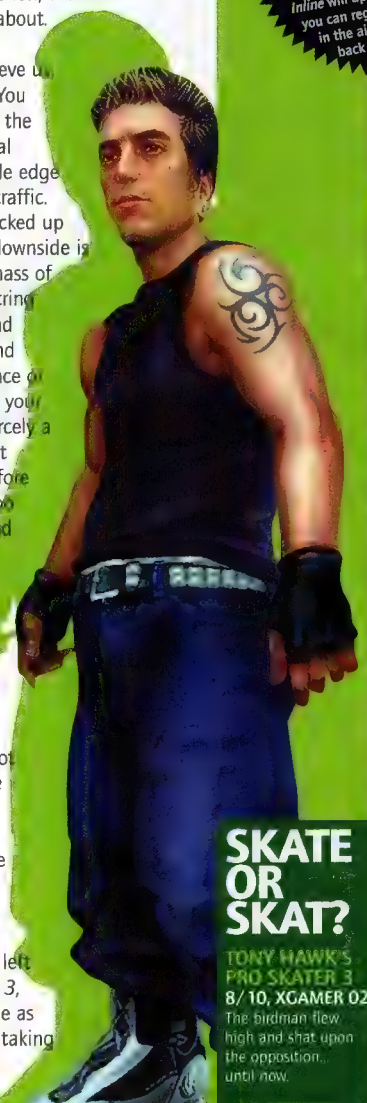
A big plus is *Inline's* nonchalant dismissal of *Tony Hawk's* stage-time slavery. A level can now only end if it's completed or your 'juice' bar runs out of zest. This bar essentially controls the action, because it's partially your goal to make sure it's topped up enough (by performing tricks) to generate more speed, more air and ultimately more points on the surrounding skatables. What's more, your skater becomes more skillful, in line (ahem) with the number of tricks you perform in a certain field (jumps, grinds, fakies, and so on), thanks to an automatic stat-boosting system. Admittedly, this feature limits your freedom to tailor the characters to your own personal style, but it compensates by inspiring you to scour the environment for point-scoring action, which is essentially what the game's all about.

ATTEMPTS TO BEND TONY HAWK'S OVER A BARREL AND COMMIT UNSPEAKABLE ACTS...

KISS ME SKATE Believe us, nothing is sacred in this game. You can exploit every square inch of the sprawling stages for some radical gain—from grinding any available edge to 'skitching' on the oncoming traffic. Freedom isn't everything it's cracked up to be though. In this case, the downside is having to master an unwieldy mass of controls, before you're able to string everything together. Every joypad button is assigned a function and you've got to press several at once or in quick succession to maximise your points potential. But there's scarcely a nanosecond to think about what you're supposed to be doing before the first obstacle approaches. Too often you'll end up lying crippled and contorted in a gory mess of blood, teeth and fear-triggered body spray. Granted, a tutorial mode gives you some hands-on experience, but it drags on endlessly when all you really want to do is get out there and wow the crowds.

All the same, once you've got to grips with the controls, *Inline* really starts to come alive. It's worth hanging in there for that gurn-cracking moment when the seemingly impossible suddenly becomes a minor hurdle to be taken in your stride.

So if there's still some wear left in your joints after *Tony Hawk's 3*, *Aggressive Inline* is as wild a ride as you're likely to find, this side of taking *Big Brother's* Jade out for a few 'quiet' drinks. **Ryan Butt**



GENIUS XGAMER FAVE BIT
Fed up being forced to bite kerb when you fly off a ramp at an awkward angle? Then *Aggressive Inline* will appeal. Press B and you can regain your balance in the air to land safely back on your feet.

SKATE OR SKAT?

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3
8/10, XGAMER 02
The birdman flew high and shat upon the opposition... until now.

SSX TRICKY
9/10, XGAMER 05
Frostier tricks than David Blaine—with added personality.

DAVE MIRRA: FREESTYLE BMX2
5/10, XGAMER 02
Okay, okay, so it's on bikes, but it's still extremely bad.

RATED AGGRESSIVE INLINE

Graphics 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not outstanding, but certainly smooth and in your face.

Gameplay 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Once mastered, this'll be inline (oh dear) for greatness.

Accessibility 1 2 3 4 5 6
The sheer number of moves makes it hard to get into at first.

Depth 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Surprisingly engrossing—each stage is riddled with secrets.

8

XGAMER VERDICT A complicated but rewarding 'see-it-skate-it' game.

Reviewer's hi-score> Level_**Movie lot** Score_**2,521,820**

ROCK AND ROLL

Tucked away within each stage are sweet spots that, when skated, trigger cut-scenes, followed by extra challenges. Here's one we found in the movie lot.

1 That rocky sphere teetering on the set clifftop should pique your interest... Skate up on this gantry and grind the slim light cables to reach it.

2 Jump off the cable when you're within leaping distance and grind the cliff around the boulder's base. Now quickly dive for cover—the ground's about to shift...

3 The surrounding rocks are scattered, sending the boulder toppling over the edge—but it's stopped from moving any further by two support chains.

4 Hmm, what would happen if you grind the chains, thus breaking them and sending the boulder off on a rampaging roll of destruction? The repercussions could be interesting...

HITCH A RIDE 'Skitching' is the art of grabbing the bumpers of passing vehicles for a lift. Not practical, but still a welcome original feature.

I GOT THE POWER Powerups litter every level, with some more difficult to retrieve than others. You must bag them all to complete each stage.

MAKE A POINT You earn points for doing just about anything, but to fully complete each level you need to go combo mad and reach several points targets.

JUICED UP Besides completing each stage's numerous tasks, you must also keep your juice bar topped up. When it empties, it's game over.

FEET OF FLAMES Max your juice bar and your stats are briefly boosted for a spurt of speed and enhanced jump capabilities. Go, fiery-footed one.

QUICK START

When all you want to do is skate, we pluck the essentials out, so you can start shredding in seconds...

MANUALS Don't waste point-scoring opportunities between apparatus. Perform a manual by pressing ↑,↓ or ↓,↑ as you ride. You'll go up on one skate and must gauge your balance via a meter, scoring all the while.

CESS SLIDES You can press the ● or ○ button while landing tricks on pipes or bowls to link seamlessly into other moves, like manuals or grinds.

TRICK LINES Remember, the ■ button is your friend. It enables you to vault over objects, 'skitch' behind cars and spin on poles—all of which are essential if you're going for the trick line points score.

LEVEL 2_CIVIC CENTRE
3HRS:47MINS:12SECS

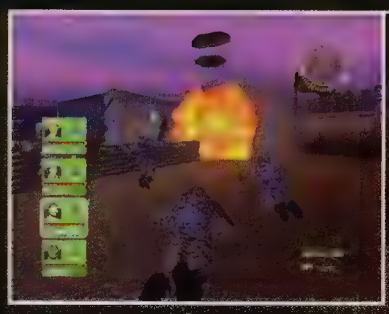
SCENE What's this for festive frolics? Shredding through the city streets, rammed with Chimble shoppers, knocking folk over, stopping traffic and generally making a nuisance of yourself.

TASK Earn as many points as possible by utilising your surroundings for grinds and vehicle 'skitching'.

FALLOUT Trams don't stop for nowt, so you'd be well advised to get the hell out the way or be diced into fleshy chunks.

LEVEL_PATRIOTIC DEFENCE
5HRS:03MINS:12SECS

SCENE An Iraqi incursion into Saudi Arabia must be stopped—but only four guys and rocket support are at your disposal.
FEELING Close
VICTORY Assured



KEEP BANGIN' Stealth has its place in *Conflict: Desert Storm*, but the levels are also crammed with heavy weaponry and tough-ass targets which demand more in-your-face annihilation. When you're in a tank's sights, make sure your men fan out or one big bang could knack the lot of 'em...

IRAQI HORDES In keeping with the real-life events of the Gulf Conflict, enemy troops consist of some decent fighters, with enough noggin to find your hidey-hole and nail you. Mercifully, there's a job lot of conscripts to blatter into the dunes too.

VAPOUR TRAIL It might not be the height of realism, but every bullet hisses out a vapour trail from its butt. This helps you judge the location of hidden assailants and provides a thrilling warning of your men's proximity to death.

BRADLEY

FOLEY

CONNORS

JONES

WE GOT A MAN DOWN! GET A GODDAMN MEDIC

Unless you're the sort of character who wears a shirt made of nettles and flows yourself for having bad thoughts about Rachel SClub, games where one shot kills will not appeal.

Luckily, *Conflict: Desert Storm* gives you plenty of chances to survive even the most devastating face-on assaults. Once his energy bar is exhausted, your man lies wriggling on the floor in agony as a new energy bar gives you about 90 seconds to lug it to Mrs and perform a swift bit of field surgery with a first aid kit. Get ready for some daring, heroic dashes through hails of crossfire as you risk life and limb to patch up your mate, ready for another attack on the enemy hideout.

Make sure he's got time to recover and follow you to safety, though, because waiting snipers will make mincemeat of a prone warrior in open ground. And that's a waste of plasters...

At this very moment, our explosives expert is dying in the air traffic control tower, and you have rapidly draining seconds to save him. Hit the roof and clear some goons!

Get out the elastoplasts and patch 'em up.

TANKS A LOT...

XGAMER FAVE BIT

The Iraqi army has plenty of tanks with which to splatter your innards all over Kuwait. Many can only be destroyed from behind—sneak around their rear while your mates cause a diversion to deliver a fatal blow.

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Oil-rich desert peninsula seeks liberation from hirsute maniac. No time-wasters, please...

On sale
September

game

- **Price** £39.99
- **Genre** Squad action
- **Players** 1-4
- **Supports** Memory unit, Dolby 5.1
- **Version** PAL
- **Movies** www.gamesdomain.com/movies/589.html

company

- **Developer** Pivotal
- **Publisher** SCi
- **Contact** 0207 585 3308 www.sci.co.uk

The prattle of automatic gunfire peppers the distant air. You signal to your three, battle-weary comrades to cover your rear as you edge around the corner of a bullet-scarred Iraqi building. An enemy sniper emerges. Connors takes him out with a rapid burst, then Foley shouts in panic, "Infantry ahead!" All hell breaks loose as a grenade explodes yards from your feet. Your squad opens fire. Eight seconds later, the enemy is pulverised. Your path, like your conscience, is clear...

Get the picture? If you were expecting a dull-as-Kuwaiti-ditchwater hardcore squad game, look elsewhere. While this third-person desert shooter enables you to control up to four soldiers in a replay of Special Forces sneakery during the Gulf War, the squad tactics take second place to action.

UP THE ARSENAL

You start the game with one soldier, Bradley, then get to rescue your mate Foley, before Connors and Jones are added to the roster. You can then toggle through to control each one directly, instructing the remainder with a simple series of commands operated by pressing D and a main button. Thankfully, the controls are so instinctive, it won't take long before you're barking orders at your boys to follow, stay put, fire at will or keep the peace. And the missions themselves are pleasingly diverse (protect civilians, rescue hostages, steal enemy information, destroy SCUD launchers...), with access to more sophisticated weaponry and air-sea back-up provided as your guys gain experience.

But while the tactical element is strong, *Conflict: Desert Storm* won't entirely satisfy fans of hardcore PC tactics games. Sure, you can set up snipers, use decoys and plot your way to victory, but moments of classic action always rear their head during critical points in the missions. Then again, when an Iraqi rounds a corner and cocks his arm to throw a grenade at your entire squad, only for you to rattle his bones with bullets, gamers of all flavours will be licking their salty lips with joy.

Ammo is plentiful, but not inexhaustible, and you're constantly facing real danger. That said, you can effectively revive downed comrades by patching them up with a medikit once their

There's no deathmatch, unfortunately, but the co-operative mode is brilliant fun, with plenty of screaming arguments as you take fire.

GAMERS WILL BE LICKING THEIR SALTY LIPS WITH JOY

QUICK START

The art of war is knowing how to kill people hard and fast. So get in there, boy, and give 'em hell!

KIT UP Your first choice is whether to don the garb of US Delta Force Troops or our own SAS. Avoid the Delta Force guys as they have a tendency to shoot their own men.

DIVE IN Unless you're a lily-livered freak, you can skip the tutorial and jump straight into the missions, picking up the simple controls as you wrestle with the first mission.

KILL OWT Don't pussy-foot about. Start killing and risk getting overwhelmed straightaway. You'll soon get the hang of handling the pressure-cooker environment of life battling the Iraqis.

energy bar reaches zero and they die (see the 'Man down' box). It's just a shame you can't pull one out on the run (or a gun, for that matter).

DAMNED REWARDING In a game where individual acts of heroism are as important as a coherent plan, one brilliant feature is the rewards system. Plug away with a specific class of weapon, say an AK-47 or a sniper rifle, and you'll improve your soldier's proficiency and his hit rate with that shooter. This system not only cultivates a fondness for your men, it has a satisfyingly direct effect on the action. If someone has two proficiency stars with a machine gun, for example, they're better at defending themselves than a similarly armed colleague with one star. Honing your men in this way enables you to customise your squad for particular weapons duties. Which doesn't mean, of course, that you can just thunder in willy-nilly. You only get two saves per level. Tight.

But there are problems with *Conflict: Desert Storm*. Short draw distances mean the scenery appears to 'pop up' from nowhere, miles away from the horizon. Meanwhile, the sluggish frame rate often upsets your men so they move with all the smoothness of Mr Bean. Perhaps the most irritating problem is the erratic collision detection. Sometimes, while your crosshairs poke over a rock, you still seem to be hitting the obstacle you're clearly not firing at.

Night missions are incredibly atmospheric as you switch to your night-vision goggles and blast through the spookily illuminated Iraqi hordes.

One incident in a sandy Saudi Arabian town sums up the sheer fun of *Conflict: Desert Storm*, while exposing the little niggles that just deny it top rank status. As my squad legged it down a narrow tunnel with a mate in pursuit, a sudden off-shoot to the right opened up, revealing a tank ready to blow us back to Blighty. I instinctively ducked around the corner and my trusty comrade, seeing the danger, pulled out a grenade and lobbed it tankward (great AI). I smiled in admiration for the fraction of a second it took for the grenade to leave his hand and chink against the wall. Then grimaced as the device erroneously ricocheted back (pants collision detection) and exploded in our faces. Smile thoroughly wiped off.

YOU'LL BE CLOSE TO TEARS WHEN YOUR FAITHFUL BUDDY TAKES A BULLET TO SAVE YOU

But while *Conflict: Desert Storm* makes a cracking lone wolf pursuit, it's revolutionised in two-player mode (though you need a nice big telly to truly appreciate it). As your friends nag one another, then leave you to die, tempers will undoubtedly fray; conversely, you'll be close to tears when your faithful buddy takes a bullet in a desperate bid to pull you from certain death. Emotional involvement, blood 'n' sand action with a liberal dash of strategy, solo *and* gung-ho groupsville slaughter... What more could we ask for? Give 'em hell, soldier... **Lee Hall**

The precision rocket attack from your friends in the Gulf proves handy when you've run out of anti-tank weapons.

TOP TIP
XGAMER UNDER COVER
It might be set in the desert, but the environments in *Conflict: Desert Storm* are peppered with sandbanks and battered walls. Survival depends on ducking behind cover and hunkering down.

TEAM DREAM

HALO
9/10, XGAMER 01
The ultimate co-op game, featuring eye-frazzling action and friendly fire incidents aplenty.

GHOST RECON
NEWS, XGAMER 05
The forthcoming squad-based shooter is pretty damned hardcore. Don't expect to go in all guns blazing here.

RATED **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM**

Graphics	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Gameplay	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not bad, but limited range of sight and occasional jerkiness		Crucially, a whole pile of fun to play. Goddamn it, I'm going in!	
Accessibility	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Depth	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Easy to pick up and control, though loading's a little slow.		You'll keep returning to save soldiers and tweak performance.	

8

XGAMER VERDICT More fun in the sand than wrestling with naked Saharan belly-dancers.

Reviewer's safest raid > Patriotic Defence–only **two medikits** used.

CACK HAWK DOWN

When a chopper is downed behind enemy lines, you're the guys they send in to clear up the mess. Prepare for battle...

1 The co-pilot's injured badly, the pilot is filling his pants and that smoke is

2 Luckily, there's a few heavy weapons to aid your cause. Train your men on

3 Artillery ahead. Take out the vehicles with their killer machine guns and

4 Get that final tank beached and protect the rescue chopper. Once you're done

ALL OUT BLASTING!

You've planned your attack, you've sniped the guy on the roof and executed the tank commander with military precision. Now it gets messy as you launch a balls-out assault on an army of Iraqi conscripts. Grenades fly, blood showers the pavement and the stench of death filters through to it, open up and your imagination. Get down kill, kill, kill!

BRUCE LEE: QUEST OF THE DRAGON

Remember the one where he judders against every doorframe for three seconds, then uses the same move on every character? No?

status: shocker

For the same price as Quest, you could snap up a Mega Drive and a copy of the far superior Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story.

On sale
Friday 30 August

game

- **Price** £39.99
- **Genre** Beat-'em-up
- **Players** 1
- **Supports** Um... the analogue controller
- **Version** NTSC
- **Movie** None

company

- **Developer** Ronin Entertainment
- **Publisher** Vivendi
- **Contact** 0118 920 9100 www.vivendi-universal-interactive.co.uk

Bruce Lee's fastest punches couldn't be captured on camera. His on-screen and on-set presence was legendary. His life was a mass of contradictions, ended by an untimely death. Can a scrolling beat-'em-up really do justice to all that? Well, possibly. But this one doesn't.

Credit where it's due, though. Sure, *Lee* looks more marionette than mercurial kung-fu legend, thanks to the awkward transitions between his moves. Yeah, most of the environments contain ladders, steps and alleyways that are frustratingly cosmetic. And, okay, the plot's some chutney to do with Lee's dad, a missing artefact and the Shaolin Temple. But—come on—they've tried where it counts.

TOUCH-UP First off, there's the clever-in-theory fighting system. Hammer the buttons in time-honoured beat-'em-up style and Lee lashes out with fists and feet in all directions, targeting the nearest attacker in any direction. But tap B and he'll lock on to a specific opponent, venting his full array of moves on them alone. More than 150 moves, in fact—some of which you can buy in-between levels. Thankfully, you don't have to remember 'em all, because it's here that the first Realistic Touch comes in. See, Lee always maintained that in a real fight, the 'straight blast', a flurry of direct punches, would be the best tactic. This philosophy's maintained in the game to such an extent that it's entirely possible to reach the first boss by doing nothing *but* the Triple Backfist. In the second level, things get a little trickier (you have to block occasionally) and somewhere towards the third boss, you'll encounter ducking ninjas (where you need to add the Low Kick to your repertoire). And so it goes on. Until you're on the last level and you haven't bothered to buy any moves, because you only used about eight of the ones you've already got. In fact, it's virtually impossible to implement the more complex combos anyway, because the control system seems to ignore button presses more or less at random. True, the game occasionally tries to force a combination out of you with Combo Fights and Multiple Fights, but all they do is reward you with more coins—and, as we've already established, you won't really be needing them.

5,000 OLD MEN Realistic Touch number two: Lee's enemies are just as sportsman-like as their on-screen counterparts. They rarely attack in groups or when your back's turned, and frequently wait for you to make the first move. The time attack mode promises that they'll 'Become More Aggressive' after a while, but it's difficult to tell. In fact, it's tempting to say that—with the exception of Nunchaku fights—all the other combat modes are exactly the same, given different titles to relieve the monotony of kicking 5,000 identically clad men in the nose.

So why the generous marking? Well, the 'Wataaahs!' and 'Woos!' are spot on and there's the odd moment where Bruce looks like the real thing. Apart from that, *Quest Of The Dragon*'s a poor second best to the weapon-intensive, challenging fun of *Final Fight*. Forget twisting back kicks—Bruce must be twirling in his grave. **Joel Snape**

CAN THEY KICK IT?

DEAD OR ALIVE 3
9/10, XGAMER 01
Jann Lee does the whoops and prancing—and kicks about 16 times as well as old Bruce here.

BARBARIAN
REVIEWED NEXT ISSUE
Lacks the kung-fu appeal, and barely makes up for it by letting you chuck boulders at people.

KUNG-FU CHAOS
REVIEWED XGAMER 10
Features the classic Lalo Schifrin 'Enter The Dragon' music.

QUICK START

Forget a lifetime of dedicated training. Just get that index fingers working, and practise your Miss Piggy noises...

PUNCH BAG Oddly, the training dummy's more frustrating than most of the early bad guys. Learn the Triple Backfist (A, A, A) and Low Kick (↑, A), then move on.

PUNCH DRUNK Although pressing A is most effective in level one, it's worth pressing B to line up on a new target occasionally, or ● to unleash a Dragon Fury if you get in trouble.

PUNCH OUT If you've got the will to carry on after level one, we suggest spending all your coins on health, attack power and rankings. The Power Drive jumping stomp looks quite nice, but it's actually rubbish.

RATED BRUCE LEE

Graphics 1 2 3
Thunderbirds animation, ugly characters and forgettable locales.

Gameplay 1 2 3 4
Don't be clever—you might forget where the A button is...

Accessibility 1 2 3 4 5
Insultingly easy to pick up; even easier to put down.

Depth 1 2
Not even a two-player mode to practise moves you've earned.

3

XGAMER VERDICT Lazy, unimaginative, tedious and frustrating—in that order.

Reviewer's hi-score> 13 combos in **combo mode**

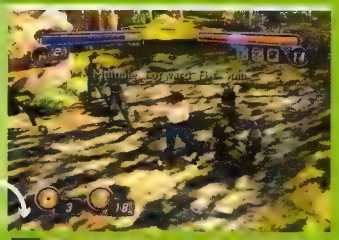
FIST OF FURY

"Absorb what is useful, reject what is useless..." runs the Jeet Kune Do philosophy. That'll be everything except the Triple Backfist, then...

1 actually more difficult to fight with, because blocking doesn't seem to be as effective. How infuriating is that?

2 then often spend three minutes trying exactly the same move, no matter how many times you counter it. Don't they learn?

3 unblockable, using up your stash of dragon tokens. This is actually quite tactical, as things go for a so-so beat-'em-up.



4 button—tends to be a waste of time, as even the manual admits they leave you "vulnerable for a second." So why pay for them, then? Tsk.

NOT THE FACE Bruce's expressions are actually pretty good, ranging from 'calm' through 'angry' to 'really scarily angry'. Wasaaah!

SPORTING CHANCE For ruthless hired assassins, the ninjas seem awfully happy to wait their turn in a pagger.

DOUBLE IMPACT Timed power-ups double the damage you inflict or let you earn extra coins and life. Except that the timer still ticks down in loading pauses between sections. Tchoh.

BRUCIE BONUS You can spend coins on increasing your Jeet Kune Do ranking (Jeet Kune Do doesn't have belts, but we'll let that go, eh?), health, power or new attacks. Dragon tokens operate on a strange six-for-one-power blast system. Why *six*?

LEVEL 2_SHAOLIN MONASTERY
0HRS:19MINS

SCENE Forty dead ninjas, 12 broken crates, barely into the game and already the numb repetition of hitting ⊗ (and occasionally ⊙) seems to be setting in.

FEELING "Wonder what's on TV?"

PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR

No, it doesn't feature a low-angle viewpoint. Find something else to drool over—preferably another game.

On sale
Friday 13 September

game

- **Price** £44.99
- **Genre** Sport
- **Players** 1-4
- **Supports** Memory unit
- **Version** PAL

company

- **Developer** Konami
- **Publisher** Konami
- **Contact** 0208 582 5573 www.konami.co.uk

Women's tennis: sport or beauty pageant? Before you answer, please take into account the prominence of Anna Kournikova, who biffed her way out of Wimbledon in the first round, hasn't won a major tournament, and yet still looks mighty fine on a poster. Consider also the way in which the Williams sisters appear to take it in turns to win championships. Answers on a midget, please.

Pro Tennis WTA Tour irritates for many reasons. It looks dreadful for a start, more early PS2 than cutting edge Xbox. Going out on a limb, I'd guess that the 'appeal' of women's tennis for a stereotypical gamer would be the spectacle of athletic beauties in skimpy outfits. Well, if you enjoy gazing at indifferently-animated proto-Stepford Wives, then *this*, my friend, is for you. The players look like they've been modelled from wipe-clean vinyl and dash around without so much as a hint of momentum. Meanwhile, the spectators are mostly identikit cardboard cut-outs that have been folded so that they can sit on their seats. Often, the viewpoint zooms in so close that it cuts the head off whoever's playing at the far end of the court, and some of the replays stutter hilariously. And, while we're here, the entire display is bafflingly fuzzy and low on contrast.

VIOLATED!
XGAMER BAG OF SHOUT
Individual spectators actually shout out your name during matches. Play as Capriati, say, and you can expect lots of shouts of "Jennifer!" Unfortunately, it sounds more like, "Phwooar! Show us yer tits!" Ugh.

UTTER BALLS *WTA* plays as bad as it looks. Unsure whether it wants to be a realistic tennis sim or a *Virtua*-style arcade romp. The range of shot types (four) and the way the ball behaves suggests a desire for realism, yet the appearance of little targets to help you smash stupidly high lobs and the way your players move like 16-bit sprites trapped in polygonal bodies screams otherwise. The result is a mess.

It gets worse. In the vital Tour game, where you slowly unlock players and locations, you can only save your progress *between* championships, which can mean upwards of an hour's uninspired play. The difficulty starts low, then skyrockets on the fourth championship, taking you from 6-0, 6-0 victories to 0-6, 0-6 defeats in minutes. On the plus side, the stat breakdowns are impressive.

It's all too horrible. Avoid it and pray for *Virtua Tennis*. **Jim McCauley**

Unstoppable Amazon Serena Williams prepares to fire a smash at Gallic gamine Justine Henin.

Anyone for doubles? We're impressed by Miss C Black, by the way. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

ON THE LINE

There's so much wrong with *Pro Tennis WTA Tour*, we couldn't squeeze all the faults into the main review. Just check these out...

1 No names to mark your progress, just a yellow line. On a white background.

2 Capriati would've jumped for that in the real world. Not in this game.

4 Is this what you're after? Shame she looks like a 16-bit throwback.

3 Woo-hoo. A smash. More by luck than skill and judgement, we hasten to add.

RATED PRO TENNIS VERDICT

Imagine winning a hot date with a top lady tennis player, then finding out it's Lindsay Davenport. Exactly. **2**

Reviewer's hi-score > 6-0, 6-0 vs Justine Henin while slumped, semi-inebriated, on my sofa.

ANTZ EXTREME RACING

About as extreme as washing your undies. And twice as dull.

On sale
Out now

game

- **Price** £44.99
- **Genre** Racing
- **Players** 1-4 (split screen)
- **Version** PAL
- **Movies** www.namco.com/games/smashing_drive.html

company

- **Developer** Supersonic
- **Publisher** Empire
- **Contact** 0208 343 9143 www.empireinteractive.com.

"Why me?" I cried. Had I done something wrong? Was this some practical joke, cooked up by the XGamer team to make my Monday particularly nasty? No. *Someone* had to review *Antz Extreme Racing*, and I happened to be next in line.

Look up "derivative" in the dictionary and it'll probably say: "See *Antz Extreme Racing*." It's a tedious novelty racer, where you pootle around, pick up insect-related weapons, speed-ups and shields, try to knock your rivals off course—and that's it. It's hard to see where you're going, the handling's pump, and despite the characters and settings, there's none of the charm of the film.

There's no easier way to milk a licence than to make a racing game out of it. If it's a 'serious' licence, stick the characters in cars (*007 Racing*, for example); if it's light-hearted, stick 'em in wacky karts. "Ha-ha-ha. How cute and funny. See how they ride the little beetles and the bees and comedy karts round and round. The little ones will love it!"

Vote with your feet and avoid this second-rate, exploitative mush. **Al Bickham**

RATED ANTZ VERDICT

Utterly tedious and feckless racer, stapled cruelly to a missed-the-boat licence. Buy and cry. **4**

"Ride me, ant girl!" Princess Bala beetles along with a complement of horny bugs as protection.

MALICE

http://malice.sierra.com

Lap 3/3
1st

Best
Lap
Lead

STUNTS 'R' US Each stunt has a certain cache which adds to your purple Stuntometer. The longer you hold the pose, the bigger the multiplier.

RADAR JAMMING Keep an eye on the map for your opponents' positions and upcoming alternative routes (for helpful shortcuts).

LUXURY *Splashdown* for Xbox doesn't have any of the annoying 'pop-up' backgrounds that mar the PS2 version.

MILL POND The Xbox does a great job of rendering the water, particularly when it's still. Sadly, in a ruckus it's rarely this still...

Seat Surfing

TRACK_MAUI, USA
1HR:55MINS:08SECS

SCENE Halfway round the final lap and you're well ahead—only a serious wipeout will ruin your chances.

METHOD After pezzing it full tilt at a ramp, make like a Beach Boy.

ADVICE Sit before you reach sea level or you'll pitch forward faster than a major league baseball.

DOING THE SEA-DOO

Mucking about in mid-air like Tony [Sea] Hawk has the bizarre spin-off effect of boosting your Sea-Doo's performance. The Stuntometer fills up as you pull off ever more outrageous and time-consuming tricks. This gradually improves your vehicle's speed and balance stats. Stunts range from the simple superman (arms on the handlebars, everything else flapping behind) to the spine-snapping BackFlip (as bad as it sounds). If you wipe out, the meter drains to nought, scuppering your new-found advantage. The trick is to experiment with D-pad and button combinations to find the best moves and then maximise your air-time by hitting the big ramps at top speed. Make sure you're back in your seat when you hit the wet stuff.

Mooning passenger liners does wonders for your Stuntometer. You'll need more than bare cheek if you're going to catch your rivals up, though.

Take care when flying past greenery or you'll go arse over tit and lose a hefty chunk of your stunt bonus before dunk-time.

SPLASHDOWN

Bloody show-offs. Who do they think they are, flouncing around on those water-bound knob extensions... Ooh, can I have a go?

NOISY BEGGARS...

XGAMER SOUND OFF

Splashdown's tune selection soon grates—surely Infogrames could've cut something a little more contemporary than Smash Mouths' "All Star"? And while you can import your own tracks, it's a pain in the jacksie to set up.

On sale
Out now

game

- **Price** £39.99
- **Genre** Racing
- **Players** 1-2
- **Supports** Memory unit, steering wheel, custom soundtracks
- **Version** PAL
- **Movies** www.gosplashdown.com

company

- **Developer** Rainbow Studios
- **Publisher** Infogrames
- **Contact** 0161 827 8061 www.gamenation.com

You know the type. Bronzed and well-thewed, and liking nothing better than a sculpted hulk of oily plastic and metal wedged between their impossibly knotted thighs. They're the hoo-hahs honking about on the water sending up swathes of foam, bobbing and smacking the surf to the sound of 1,000 strangled African bees and a headful of Californian dreams, a faint whiff of Brüt narcissism hanging in the air.

But, though it pains me to say it, I can almost see where they're coming from with *Splashdown*, Infogrames' exhilarating, wave-hopping racer which deftly crams the best bits from *Wave Race* and *Tony Hawk's* into its salty mix and even gets me—the biggest of landlubbers—hankering for a wet leather seat. For a bit anyway. The machines may be virtual, but the excitement certainly isn't as you burst through 18 tempestuous courses, opening up ever more elaborate and tricksy routes. Two bonus runs (Maine's Ruminer Point and the Florida keys) and two additional characters (Coral Suarez and Jonah Barrett) bolster this Xbox version, with more spanky wetsuits and kit stashed away until you can handle them.

FOAM FACE-OFF As with EA's *Rumble Racing*, it's winning in style that counts. Successfully perform any of the 30 acrobatic stunts as you thrust foam into your foes' faces (simply press one of three buttons and/or trigger, while twiddling the left analogue stick) and you'll be unlocking new courses before hitting the beach bar at sundown. Each character also boasts his own special move—although repeated stunts are rightly penalised, compelling you to master string together more imaginative combos to max out the Stuntometer.

Unlike the rest of the field, Andy didn't get enough air and will shortly disturb an elderly French couple's afternoon stroll on the promenade.

Feverish racing in Madrid—just one of the tracks you can unlock in Career mode. Venice and Tokyo are also on the list of watery stop-offs.

But while *Splashdown* is buoyed up by the stunt system, there's not much difference between the courses. Or, for that matter, the Sea-Doos themselves. Liquid smooth animation to beggar the genre's best is all well and good, but dip a little deeper and you won't be so impressed. Which isn't to say *Splashdown* doesn't tickle our novelty zones a little. At every three or four races in the career mode, for instance, there's an optional one-on-one challenge round. And if you win, your opponent joins your team for the next race, for added kudos and tricks. You and a mate can also race your Sea-Doo against theirs, laughing at each other's milk-sop athleticism when Sea-Doo meets Doggy-Doo, obstacle style.

LAUGH AT EACH OTHER'S MILK-SOP ATHLETICISM...

It might not quite capture the skim and weave the real toned wavemeisters savour, carving florid swirls with buzz and bravado in the pungent effluent of an unhealthy British tide, but there's still something alluring about Infogrames' H_2O showcase. As long as the slick FX keep you enthralled, you'll remain eager for a face full of ocean spray... **Marc Saltzman**

QUICK START

You've been talced into that wetsuit and your Sea-Doo's primed. Now what? Hit the water!

BODY TALK Lean back for extra speed, forwards to brake as you're going into corners.

THE LONGER THE BETTER The longer you 'hold' a stunt, the more credit you earn. Don't push your luck, though, or you'll land minus Sea-Doo and dignity. Bear in mind that you'll get less performance kudos for repeating similar moves.

SMASHING WAVES In rough water, you'll inevitably bounce around a lot, losing speed. Point your nose down into the waves and slice through them, to maintain your Sea-Doo's speed and stability.

RATED SPLASHDOWN

Graphics 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
The best water effects we've seen yet.

Gameplay 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Acrobatics impress; but courses are a bit samey.

Accessibility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Suitably narcissistic pick-up-and-play.

Depth 1 2 3 4 5 6
After the dazzle dies, the gameplay falters with it.

7

XGAMER VERDICT Not the most fun you'll have on water, but wet 'n' wild enough.

IMPORT ONLY

TETRIS WORLDS

Oh my God... They've killed Tetris. You bastards!

On Sale (US)
Now

On Sale (UK)
November

game

- **US Price** $29.99
- **UK Import Price** £63.99
- **Genre** Puzzle
- **Players** 1-4
- **Supports** Heck, I don't think it supports anything flash at all
- **Version** NTSC
- **Movies** None

company

- **Developers** Radical Entertainment
- **Publisher** THQ
- **Contact** 01483 767 656 www.thq.com

How is it possible to screw up *Tetris*? Well, you can throw in variations on a *Tetris* theme, all of which pale beside the original—and make them so complicated that players will forever need to consult the manual. Then mess with the classic formula itself, changing the bright primary colours to confusing pastels, imposing new time limits that can't be adjusted, stripping out the old scoring system, and altering the speed and controls to include a new Hard Drop feature that you'll often hit by accident.

So far, so bad. But for real genius, what would really annoy the eager *Tetris* fan?

Would you believe, a loading screen? That's right. There are two extra designers and six programmers listed in the credits, and between them they couldn't even cram *Tetris* into the Xbox's memory on start-up.

Ah, but the *pièce de résistance* is still to come. We can't tell if it's a glitch or not, but you can hold the spin button and keep any block rotating indefinitely, then slide it around, even after it hits the layer of blocks at the bottom. That's right: this version enables you to *cheat*. And once you know it's there...

Look, if you desperately want basic *Tetris* on Xbox, you can still get a half-reasonable game by disabling all the flashy options. You'll have the advantage of two-four player battles, albeit with unfair rules, and there are even new features like Hold Piece that might add to your enjoyment without offending your sense of purity. But I love *Tetris*—I was doing T-spins before I discovered they had a name—and I'd recommend any other version over this. **Zy Nicholson**

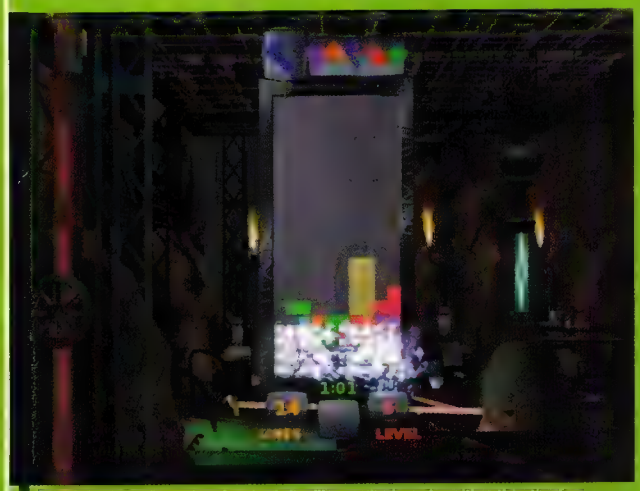
VOX POP
XGAMER RETRO-DEGRADE
We wouldn't actually mind if the Xbox got decent multiplayer versions of *Puzzle Bobble* or *Puyo Puyo*, but what do you think? Is an überconsole really the platform for yesterday's 2D puzzle games?

RATED TETRIS VERDICT
Compared to the original, *Tetris Worlds* is akin to scribbling a moustache on the Mona Lisa. In highlighter pens. **4**

Talk about missing the point. What made the first *Tetris* such a hit was its simplicity. This Xbox version jettisons all that in favour of pointless 'enhancements'. Not all of them cosmetic, either.

INDUSTRIAL WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY

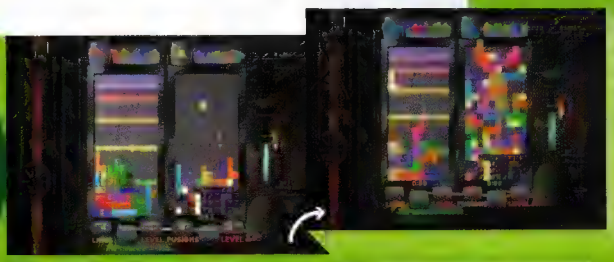
Once, *Tetris* was an innocent girl from the Steppes, a Moscow ingenue made good. Now she's a painted trollop, pickled in cheap Western vodka. Poor cow.



The cutting edge of consoles, gleaming in its silicon purity, humming with anticipation for... falling bricks against a drab industrial scene of gas-jets and girders. Oh, the shame of it.

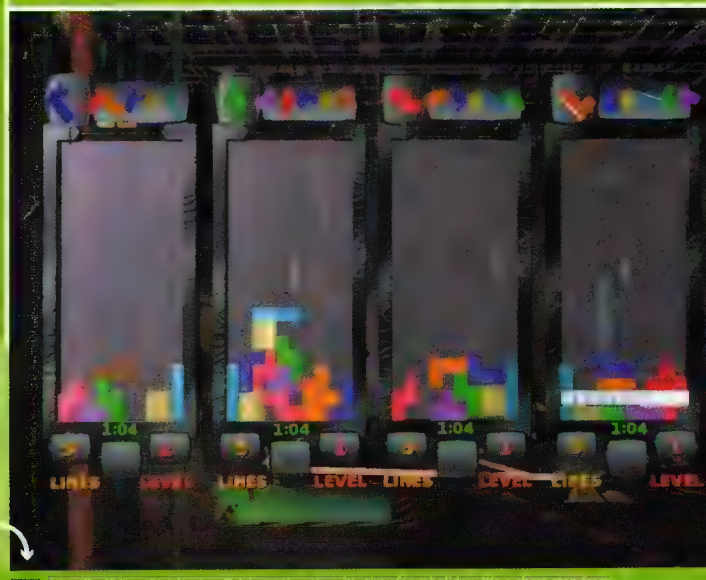
BLOCK BUST

There's no option to play against the computer, so you'd better have some mates to play with...

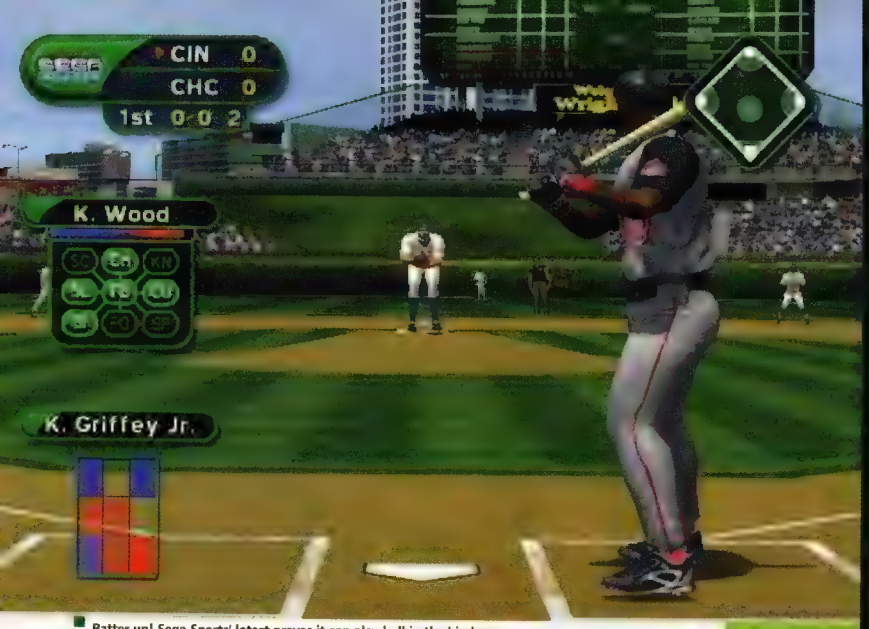


1 I should have thrashed new kid Duncan ten minutes ago...

2 But he's keeping that corner block spinning with a cheat. Oh!



3 Actually, if you start having *Tetris* parties, then it's time for a holiday. It's a short step from Russian tessellated tile-shifting to jigsaw orgies and Jenga raves, mark my words.



Batter up! Sega Sports' latest proves it can play ball in the big leagues...

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

IMPORT ONLY

Triple Play at last has a rival—and its name is World Series shaped.

On Sale (US)
Now

On Sale (UK)
Not likely

game

- **US price** $49.95
- **UK import price** £29.99
- **Genre** Baseball
- **Players** 1-2
- **Supports** Memory unit, Dolby Digital
- **Version** NTSC
- **Movies** www.segasports.com/channel_baseball.jsp

company

- **Developers** Visual Concepts/Blue Shift
- **Publisher** Sega
- **Contact** www.segasports.com

Veteran gamers may recall Sega's *World Series Baseball* was second-to-none on the Genesis and Saturn, but then proved to be a major league disappointment on the ill-fated Dreamcast. Well, as they say, what comes up, must come down, and, er, up again, as demonstrated by Sega Sports' Xbox take on *WSB*.

Similar to EA's exceptional *Triple Play* for the Xbox, this game features a ball park load of modes to choose from, and serious players won't find a more exhaustive franchise mode. For the first time in the series, you can manipulate everything, from pitching rotation and season length to free agent signings and league budgets. Better still, as with *Triple Play*, it plays more like an arcade game—batting requires you to predict where the ball will be thrown and then correctly time the swing (or bunt). Success at the plate is split between your skill and the real player's stats, plus a slew of selectable batter aids.

Despite being the best-looking game in the series, minor graphical niggles still raise their head: players run through each other, for instance, the models don't much resemble their real counterparts, and the stadiums aren't as detailed as those you find in other games.

But at last, Sega Sports has proven it can play in the big leagues. *World Series Baseball* is a stellar choice for Xbox owners and almost on par with *Triple Play 2002*. **Marc 'Slugger' Saltzman**

RATED BASEBALL VERDICT

Undoubtedly Sega Sports' best effort yet—and almost the best baseball game for the Xbox. Almost. *Triple Play* still has the edge. 8

IMPORT CHANNEL

XGamer bags its American and Japanese imports from TQ Games

Contact 08707 454840 **Website** www.tqgames.co.uk

You've probably heard about importing or you know somebody who's done it, so what's it all about? And what do you need to get started? Be warned, it's no small step to take...

WHAT YOU NEED

Have you got the set-up to run a Japanese or US console? Unless you're planning to blow it up, you'll need a reliable stepdown transformer to provide the power supply of 110V at a decent wattage (200-300 watts).

Then, to get a picture, you'll need a TV that accommodates an NTSC signal, specifically 'nice' NTSC 3.58 (not bad NTSC 4.43). Check the manual, not just the sockets. Does it support composite video, S-Video, SCART or component RGB? True RGB SCART cables are available for X-Box and can arguably deliver a better picture than the lead that comes with it.

WHERE TO BUY

You'll find grey importers advertising in the classified sections of games magazines, or you can try searching online. But most transactions will be done by phone or Net. Look out for recommendations from previous customers and ask in games forums for their track record.

HOW TO BUY

Some UK importers have a habit of charging more than others. But with a UK importer you can check to see if they have the goods in stock. Foreign exporters can take a long time to deliver to the UK.

WHY IMPORT?

Not all games get a simultaneous release, and us Europeans are usually the ones who are made to wait. Sometimes forever. A few US and Japanese titles never get released here at all.

The problem with buying games on import is compatibility. Xbox game code contains a territorial lock-out dividing the world into NTSC (USA), NTSC-J (Japan) and PAL regions (the rest of the world).

WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO AROUND

There is no such thing as a manufacturer's warranty when you import. If something goes wrong, then there's little you can do about it. This is not a hobby to get into unless you can afford it, and any advantage of shopping outside rip-off Blighty will be countered by shipping, import tax and the Spong Levy (a special mark-up thrown in for early adopters).

WAKARIMASU KA?

Every importer can tell you of a customer who bought a Japanese game and was shocked to find they couldn't understand a word of it...

ENTRY DENIED USA & JAPAN RELEASE ONLY	
NFL 2K3 New game for new season	US
NFL FEVER 2003 Go online with Xbox Live	US
NFL BLITZ 20-03 The wacky arcade one	US
OUTLAW GOLF Go clubbing on Xbox	US
DEAD TO RIGHTS Oi! Bring it over here, Namco	US
BREAK NINE Billiards for sir?	JP
MURAKUMO Passable Mecha effort	JP
FLIGHT ACADEMY Civilian flight sim	JP

ENTRY GRANTED WELCOME TO THE UK	
SILENT HILL: INNER FEAR Psycho-horror adventure	SEP
CRAZY TAXI 3 The graveyard shift	SEP
WWE RAW A crushing disappointment	OCT
SEGA SOCCER SLAM Cartoon footie romp	OCT
PHANTOM CRASH Robot wars, Korean-style	OCT
MORROWIND: ELDER SCROLLS RPG	NOV
TOCA RACE DRIVER Looks great, long wait	DEC
STEEL BATTALION Known as Tekki in Japan	2003

hit list

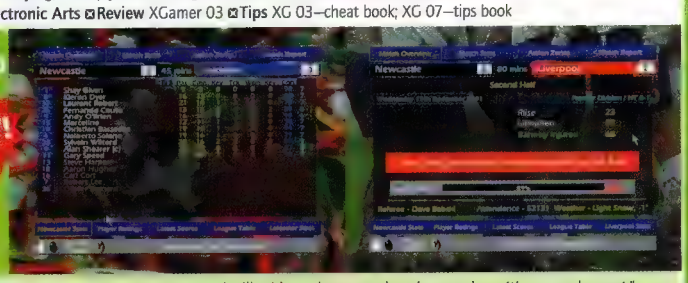
ALERT! WEALTH HAZARD WARNING

Keep your money in your fist till you take a look at our reviews list.

GAME NAME	SCORE	VERDICT
4X4 EVO2	7/10	"Despite a small mud pile of flaws, this off-road sim has enough depth for racing fans to climb behind the wheel." ⊠Racing ⊠Take 2 ⊠Review XGamer 05 ⊠Tips XG 07–tips book
ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2003	6/10	"The tempo of this game reminds me of wandering endlessly in an RPG looking for that elusive fourth elemental amulet." ⊠Baseball ⊠Acclaim ⊠Review XGamer 03 ⊠Tips XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
AMPED: FREESTYLE SNOWBOARDING	8/10	"Turns skidding down hill on a plank into an unmissable experience." ⊠Snowboarding ⊠Microsoft ⊠Review XGamer 01 ⊠Tips XG 01–tip and cheat; XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
ARCTIC THUNDER	5/10	"Big initial thrills soon peter out. *Arctic Thunder* is a distinctly average and shallow racer." ⊠Arcade racing ⊠Midway ⊠Review XGamer 01 ⊠Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
AZURIK: RISE OF PERATHIA	4/10	"*Azurik* is now the benchmark for all arcade adventure games wanting to surpass the blatantly average post. Ignore." ⊠Arcade adventure ⊠Microsoft ⊠Review XGamer 02 ⊠Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
BATMAN VENGEANCE	5/10	"The coders should've been hunted down by the real Batman and banged up mid-development for crimes against games." ⊠Arcade adventure ⊠Ubi Soft ⊠Review XGamer 02 ⊠Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
BLOOD OMEN 2: LEGACY OF KAIN	6/10	"Even without the iffy combat, this is a fairly anaemic experience." ⊠3D platform ⊠Eidos ⊠Review XGamer 03 ⊠Tips XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
BLOODWAKE	6/10	"Not the most earth-shattering game, but technically accomplished and fun. Just tackle it in limited doses, that's all." ⊠Shoot-'em-up ⊠Microsoft ⊠Review XGamer 02 ⊠Tips XG 02–cheat; XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–cheats; XG 07–tips book
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER	6/10	"A sound but yawnsome affair. Fans will be coffin into their tea." ⊠Action-adventure ⊠EA ⊠Review XGamer 06 ⊠Tips XG 07–tips guide and maps
BURNOUT	7/10	"Exhilarating racer marred by repetitive replays." ⊠Arcade racer ⊠Acclaim ⊠Review XGamer 04 ⊠Tips XG 07–tips book
CEL DAMAGE	3/10	"When a game is this annoying, it simply cannot be good. And this game is hugely annoying..." ⊠Vehicle combat ⊠Electronic Arts ⊠Review XGamer 03 ⊠Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book

CHAMP MANAGER SEASON 01/02 9/10

BUY!



CIRCUS MAXIMUS: CHARIOT WARS	6/10	"They say Rome wasn't built in a day, so perhaps a sequel will address these nagging shortcomings. It's so nearly great." ⊠Racing ⊠Encore ⊠Review XGamer 03 ⊠Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE	8/10	"An underwhelming conversion can't quite obscure its brilliance." ⊠Real-time strategy ⊠Eidos ⊠Review XGamer 07 ⊠Tips XG 07–tips
CRASH	8/10	"A big leap forward for crashing games. Get the cash, go buy *Crash*." ⊠Vehicle combat ⊠Rage ⊠Review XGamer 03 ⊠Tips XG 06–cheats; XG 07–tips book
CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX	5/10	"Too crusty, too old school. The Xbox is capable of much, much more." ⊠Platformer ⊠Vivendi Universal ⊠Review XGamer 03 ⊠Tips XG 06–tips; XG 07–tips book
DARK SUMMIT	5/10	"*Dark Summit* starts out with noble intentions, but it's downhill (slowly) for the rest of the way." ⊠Snowboarding ⊠THQ ⊠Review XGamer 02 ⊠Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
DAVE MIRRA: FREESTYLE BMX 2	5/10	"Whether you dig extreme sports or not buy *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* instead. If you can afford both, just buy *Tony Hawk's*." ⊠BMX ⊠Acclaim ⊠Review XGamer 02 ⊠Tips XG 02–cheat; XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book

FAULTLINE

PUBLISHERS

SPECIAL BRANCH

RETAILERS

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CAUTION

ALWAYS...

COMPLAINTS

0345 23 44 80

GAME NAME	SCORE	VERDICT
DAVID BECKHAM SOCCER	4/10	"Plays like a rotting mackerel. Beckham has signed up for the Grimsby Town of football games." ▫Football ▫Rage ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 05–guide; XG 07–tips book
DEADLY SKIES	4/10	"Decent looking, but ultimately unfulfilling arcade combat sim. There's no need to shell out on the Xbox flight stick yet." ▫Arcade flight combat ▫Konami ▫Review XGamer 01

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

9/10

BUY!

DRAGON'S LAIR II: TIMEWARP IMPORT ONLY	0/10	"Take a dump and stick it in your mouth, that's *Dragon's Lair II* (only you'd still have £40 to buy some mouthwash)." ▫Interactive movie ▫Digital Leisure ▫Review XGamer 05
ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND, THE IMPORT ONLY	6/10	"Balancing highs and lows, Morrowind is big, bold and full of holes." ▫RPG ▫Ubi Soft ▫Review XGamer 07
ENCLAVE	5/10	"Well done, it looks super. Now go back and put a game in there." ▫Third-person slasher ▫Swing ▫Review XGamer 07
ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS 2002	2/10	"Only slightly less tedious than watching a granite block sliding at knuckle-bitingly slow speed along a sheet of ice." ▫Winter Olympics ▫Konami ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 07–tips book
ESPN WINTER X GAMES SNOWBOARDING 2002	4/10	"Frustrating in the extreme. There's no need to subject yourself to this when the likes of *Amped* grace the shelves." ▫Snowboarding ▫Konami ▫Review XGamer 04
F1 2002	6/10	"The usual Formula One 'game'–but on the Xbox." ▫Racing ▫EA ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
FIFA WORLD CUP, 2002	6/10	"Quite a spectacle, but the shallow gameplay is unfulfilling." ▫Football ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 04–tip; XG 05–guide; XG 07–tips book
FUZION FRENZY	6/10	"Stacks of games in one and fun in bursts, but lacks the invention or character to hold your attention for long." ▫Mini-game compendium ▫Microsoft ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 01–cheat; XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY	2/10	"*Gauntlet: Dark Legacy* is duller than a blow to the head with a frozen turkey. And just as painful." ▫Action adventure ▫Midway ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
GENMA ONIMUSHA	8/10	"Brutal, compelling and shockingly fun. Shame it's over so quickly." ▫Samurival horror ▫Capcom ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
GUN METAL	5/10	"A entirely average shooter that's buried some good ideas in a sludge of misfiring mediocrity." ▫Shoot-'em-up ▫Rage ▫Review XGamer 05
GUN VALKYRIE	6/10	"It starts out feeling like The Perfect Game–then falls from grace..." ▫Shoot-'em-up ▫Sega ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 04–tip; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book

HALO

9/10

BUY!

HUNTER THE RECKONING	3/10	"More repetitive and dated than a long line of evenly placed dates. Go hunting for action elsewhere." ▫Slash-'em-up ▫Virgin ▫Review XGamer 06 ▫Tips XG 07–tips book
ISS2	7/10	"Not stunning but certainly the best Xbox football game so far." ▫Football ▫Konami ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 05–guide and cheats; XG 06–cheat; XG 07–tips book
JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE	6/10	"Very Bondesque, but you won't be attempting re-entry." ▫First-person shooter ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 07–tips; XG 07–tips book

JET SET RADIO FUTURE

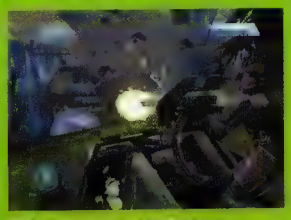
9/10

BUY!

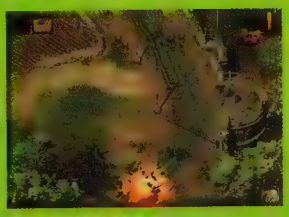
GAME NAME	SCORE	VERDICT
KABUKI WARRIORS IMPORT ONLY	3/10	"Tedious scrapper that raises not a blip on the heart monitor. Do not attempt to play this at home." ▫Beat-'em-up ▫Crave ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible
KNOCKOUT KINGS 2002	6/10	"It might please the mainstream, but *Knockout Kings* will certainly leave fans of the series a touch cold." ▫Boxing ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 02 ▫Tips XG 06–cheats; XG 07–tips book
LEGENDS OF WRESTLING	5/10	"Another mediocre wrestling game, one for fanatics only." ▫Wrestling ▫Acclaim ▫Review XGamer 06 ▫Tips XG 07–cheats; XG 07–tips book
MAD DASH RACING	6/10	"Slick-as-you-like speed thrills but comedy bananas and a flatulent warthog called Chops do not a lasting race game make." ▫Foot-based comedy racer ▫Eidos ▫Review XGamer 02 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–cheat; XG 07–tips book
MADDEN NFL 2002 IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"If you have time to invest, *Madden's* depth and tactical nous make it the best American football game available on Xbox." ▫American football ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
MAX PAYNE	9/10	"[illegible] BUY IT! [illegible]" ▫[illegible] ▫[illegible] ▫Tips [illegible]
MIKE TYSON HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING	7/10	"A fun 'n' frantic slugger without the stamina to keep it off the ropes." ▫Beat-'em-up ▫Codemasters ▫Review XGamer 05 ▫Tips XG 07–tips
MOTO GP URT	8/10	"The best bike racing game around, perfect for novices and pros alike." ▫Motorbike racing ▫THQ ▫Review XGamer 05 ▫Tips XG 06–cornering guide; XG 07–tips book
MX2002	4/10	"An arcadey experience, but it lacks any of the depth, finesse and audio-visual splendour that Xbox gamers demand." ▫Moto X ▫THQ ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 07–tips book
NASCAR HEAT 2002 IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"A bit too much like racing on a giant roundabout, but otherwise a decent upstanding member of the racing community." ▫Racing ▫Infogrames ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book
NASCAR THUNDER 2002 IMPORT ONLY	7/10	"Not Xbox's finest racer–*RalliSport Challenge* has that honour–but still more fun than a southern-fried can of whoop-ass." ▫Racing ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book
NBA 2K2 IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"*NBA Live 2002* has a more established name and *NBA Inside Drive* may be prettier, but *NBA 2K2* is the best." ▫Basketball ▫Sega ▫Review XGamer 05
NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2002	8/10	"Everything you'd ever want in a basketball game: solid AI, ample dunks, controllable defenders and properly arcing jump shots." ▫Basketball ▫Microsoft ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
NBA LIVE 2002	2/10	"Not even NBA fans will find any joy in this game. EA should have spent more money on the game instead of the licence." ▫Basketball ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
NEW LEGENDS	3/10	"*New Legends*? Old Dog-ends more like. If this is the future of fighting games, I'm taking up macramé" ▫Third-person slash-'em-up ▫THQ ▫Review XGamer 05 ▫Tips XG 07–tips book
NEZMIX IMPORT ONLY	3/10	"A charming idea gets caught in linearity and repetition. In essence–nice graphics; shame about the game." ▫Arcade adventure ▫Microsoft ▫Review XGamer 03
NFL 2K2 IMPORT ONLY	7/10	"The easiest of the three American football titles to pick up, yet *NFL 2K2* is the most frustrating to master. And the name *is* daft." ▫American football ▫Sega ▫Review XGamer 02
NFL BLITZ 20-02 IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"Still the best NFL game to go for if you're not an American footie fan–but just fancy hitting a few big blokes." ▫American football ▫Midway ▫Review XGamer 03 ▫Tips XG 07–tips book
NFL FEVER 2002 IMPORT ONLY	7/10	"Got lots of friends to play with? *NFL Fever* is easier to pick up and enjoy than *Madden*." ▫American football ▫Microsoft ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
NHL 2002	8/10	"Same high-speed gameplay that's graced the series since the Mega Drive days, but PS2-flavour graphics keep it this side of superb." ▫Ice hockey ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
NHL HITZ 20-02	6/10	"In terms of replicating ice hockey this is impressive. But, as an experience, *NHL Hitz* leaves you feeling strangely unfulfilled." ▫Ice hockey ▫Midway ▫Review XGamer 02 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
NIGHTCASTER	6/10	"Decent enough. Incurable fantasy fans would be advised to try it. A more engaging storyline would have made it a seven out of ten." ▫Arcade adventure ▫Microsoft ▫Review XGamer 02 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE	7/10	"Good-natured characterful puzzling, but it may repeat on you." ▫Arcade adventure ▫Microsoft ▫Review XGamer 01 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 03–tip; XG 04/XG 07–tips book
OFF ROAD: WIDE OPEN	1/10	"Putting this into your Xbox would be more disrespectful than trying to ram raid Westminster Abbey in a Lada." ▫Off-road racer ▫Infogrames ▫Review XGamer 02 ▫Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
OUTLAW GOLF IMPORT ONLY	7/10	"Ought to be terrible, but actually proves curiously enjoyable." ▫Golf ▫Simon & Schuster ▫Review XGamer 07 ▫Tips XG 07–tips book
PIRATES: LEGEND OF BLACK KAT	5/10	"A fantastically good-looking piece of software, with an utterly standard game attached. Classic software piracy." ▫Adventure ▫Electronic Arts ▫Review XGamer 04 ▫Tips XG 06–cheats; XG 07–tips book
PRISONER OF WAR	7/10	"High on heartrate-hiking tension, but lacking in thrills." ▫Stealth-adventure ▫Codemasters ▫Review XGamer 06 ▫Tips XG 07–tips

XGAMER RECOMMENDS

If you can only afford to shell out for one game this month, make sure it's one of these...



HALO



COMMANDOS 2

CONFLICT DESERT STORM

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Want to read all the above reviews in full? Ring our back issues hotline to snap up the few issues we've got knocking around our warehouse, but hurry–they're running out the door.

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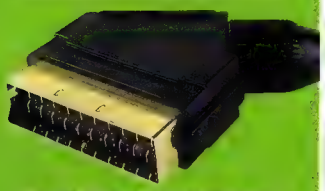
GET THE BEST TV CONNECTION

Do screen images as fluffy as a tow-headed kitten? Upgrade and wave (them) ove to your cable sites.

➔ RGB SCART



➔ S-VIDEO

➔ COMPOSITE

➔ RF (TV AERIAL)

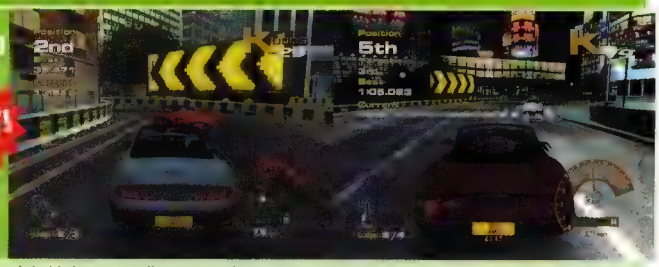
➔ ALL IN ONE

➔ HIGH-DEF

BE WARNED...

Not all tellys are created equal. With differing build qualities, some S-Video connections are actually better than some RGB SCART sockets. Likewise, some SCART connections are really just SCART-shaped composite sockets. If in

GAME NAME	SCORE	VERDICT
PROJECT GOTHAM RACING	9/10	BUY! "A fantastic package offering [illegible] addictive fun." ▣ Racing ▣ Microsoft ▣ Review XGamer 01 ▣ Tips XG 01–tips book
RALLISPORT CHALLENGE	8/10	"Despite the unofficial vibe, it holds its own. *Colin McRae 3*–it's your move." ▣ Rallying ▣ Microsoft ▣ Review XGamer 02 ▣ Tips XG 07–tips book
RED CARD	7/10	"Lack of depth means it won't last the full season but it's bloody good fun nonetheless." ▣ Football ▣ Midway ▣ Review XGamer 05 ▣ Tips XG 07–tips book
SHIKIGAMI NO SHIRO IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"Fast, fun, and pixel-perfect; proving that a lack of complexity doesn't stop a game from being great." ▣ Shoot-'em-up ▣ Media Works ▣ Review XGamer 05
SHREK	4/10	"Boring and unrewarding platform pokery. Those without standards might like it. The rest... what do you reckon?" ▣ Platform ▣ TDK ▣ Review XGamer 02 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
SILENT HILL: RESTLESS DREAMS IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"Scary. Compelling. Challenging. Almost as good as the original." ▣ Survival horror ▣ Konami ▣ Review XGamer 01 ▣ Tips XG 02–tip; XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE, THE	4/10	"Take out *The Simpsons* and you've got a hollow mockery of a game. Wrapped in a vest." ▣ Arcade driving ▣ Electronic Arts ▣ Review XGamer 01 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
SLAM TENNIS	7/10	"The Perfect Tennis Game? No, not quite, but it's the best game set and match so far. One to be recommended." ▣ Tennis ▣ Infogrames ▣ Review XGamer 06
SMASHING DRIVE IMPORT ONLY	3/10	"This simplistic, repetitive driving game is Namco's first Xbox game–let's hope they do better with the next one." ▣ Racing ▣ Namco ▣ Review XGamer 05 ▣ Tips XG 07–tips book
SPIDER-MAN	6/10	"A lazy average adaption. This isn't what you bought an Xbox for." ▣ Action-adventure ▣ Activision ▣ Review XGamer 05 ▣ Tips XG 05–cheat and tip; XG 06–cheats; XG 07–tips book
SPYHUNTER	7/10	"You'll greedily snort it up but the ensuing fun is short-lived." ▣ Shoot-'em-up ▣ Midway ▣ Review XGamer 04 ▣ Tips XG 05–tip; XG 07–tips book
SSX TRICKY	9/10	BUY! "The best trick [illegible] since Calypso Cam [illegible] about life." ▣ [illegible] ▣ Tips [illegible]
STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER	7/10	"Decent shoot-'em-up but shorter life expectancy than a Stormtrooper." ▣ Shoot-'em-up ▣ LucasArts ▣ Review XGamer 04 ▣ Tips XG 07–tips book
STAR WARS: OBI-WAN	5/10	"Has its moments, but then so did *The Phantom Menace*." ▣ Action adventure ▣ LucasArts ▣ Review XGamer 02 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER S.E. IMPORT ONLY	6/10	"An uninspired port of an overrated PS2 game. Fun while it lasts." ▣ Dogfighting shoot-'em-up ▣ LucasArts ▣ Review XGamer 01 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
TD OVERDRIVE	2/10	"A heap of a racer, made with all the love and effort that a supermarket trolley boy shows for his four-wheeled charges." ▣ Street racer ▣ Infogrames ▣ Review XGamer 04 ▣ Tips XG 07–tips book
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X IMPORT ONLY	7/10	"Tony looks great on the box, but *2x* is a step backwards for Hawk's veterans. Hang on for *Tony Hawk's 3*." ▣ Skateboarding ▣ Activision ▣ Review XGamer 01 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3	8/10	"Criminally addictive, relentless thrills but not truly radical." ▣ Skateboarding ▣ Activision ▣ Review XGamer 02 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 03/04–level guide; XG 05/07–tips book
TOUR DE FRANCE	4/10	"Uninspired cycle effort. Someone switched imagination to autopedal." ▣ Bicycle racing ▣ Konami ▣ Review XGamer 07
TRANSWORLD SURF	7/10	"Bold, fun and well worth a gander. Nice to see an extreme sports game without a Roman numeral. Yet." ▣ Surfing ▣ Infogrames ▣ Review XGamer 02 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
TRIPLE PLAY BASEBALL 2002 IMPORT ONLY	8/10	"EA hits a home run–but not a grand slam–with its latest offering. The best arcade-like baseball experience on Xbox." ▣ Baseball ▣ EA ▣ Review XGamer 06 ▣ Tips XG 07–tips book
UFC: TAPOUT	3/10	"Messy, vacuous and oddly non-violent fighting that's as likely to grip you as Giant Haystacks is of making a career comeback." ▣ Beat-'em-up ▣ Ubi Soft ▣ Review XGamer 03 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book
WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS	6/10	"A fantastic demo of the Xbox graphics processor but not much else." ▣ Driving ▣ Activision ▣ Review XGamer 02 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 05–tips bible; XG 07–tips book
WWF RAW IMPORT ONLY	5/10	"Wrestling–as portrayed by people who don't watch wrestling much." ▣ Wrestling ▣ THQ ▣ Review XGamer 03 ▣ Tips XG 03–cheat book; XG 07–tips book



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STAYING

DANGER! READ THE TIPS OR BE DAMNED TO

If at first you don't succeed... then, frankly it's your own fault for not cheating like a pro.

xpert tip

legends of wrestling

Become a true legend.

For a title shot in the game, you need 100% popularity—and for that you need match excitement bonuses. Here's a list of the main ones.

Dominating bonus
Control the match—don't even give your enemy a chance to get into it.

Extreme damage
Awarded only when you apply mega damage to your opponent.

Combo bonus
Multiple moves (without your opponent managing a counter/reversal).

Move variety
Refrain from repeating your favourite or most devastating attacks.

Finisher bonus
Win with a finishing move (using right thumbstick).

Break up pinfall
Escape losing with a shake off.

Break up submission
Escape from a submission.

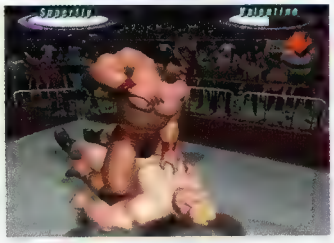
Reversal bonus
Get out of a tight spot with the reversal move.

Knock out bonus
Win by pure power (no pins or submissions).

Weapon attack
Chairs, bars—you name it, their face has met it.

Tag Bonus
Easy to win in three- or four-way games.

Bloody match
Knock seven shades of plop out of each other.



UNDERCOVER AGENTS

Each issue we ask you to do our job for us, and mercifully you're all willing to oblige. You might win a prize though, so keep 'em rolling in!

SECRET SERVICE

NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2002

Get small players
Go to the codes menu and enter SMALLSHOES as a code to get amusing mini players. Enter the code again to disable it.
Stephen Tobin, Ireland

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

Unlock Ein
Head up the leader board in survival/time attack modes and enter your name as 'Ein' to unlock him in the main game.
Scott Lever, Bolton

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

Unlock every character, course and cheat in career mode
Pause the game and hold down L and R, then press consecutively: ⬅, A, ●, ↑, →, ↓, A, Y, B, A, B, Y. This spells out Saturday baby and unlocks everything.
Karl Thomas, Cheshire

CIRCUS MAXIMUS: CHARIOT WARS

Unlock Minotaur and Scorpius
Successfully complete the game tournament mode on the advanced skill setting.

Sallus and Agrippa
Complete both tournament and academy modes, normal difficulty.

xpert tip

star wars: jedi starfighter

The Force—more than just lame Jedi jokes?

These can only be used when you're piloting the Jedi Starfighter itself, so be warned of their limitations.

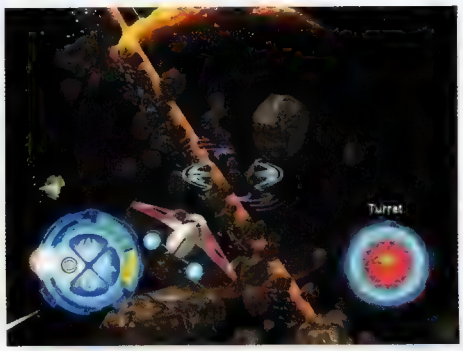
Each of the four force powers uses up a different amount of power, so be careful which you choose—it's best to have some power left over for emergencies.

Force shield
This small but important power minimises the effects of incoming laser attacks, and will double as the primary shields during its activation period.

Force lightning
Force power used for this attack increases as you use more of the available power-up. It surrounds the targeted ship with the damaging lightning, and rebounds onto other ships when power is at maximum.

Force reflexes
Essentially reduces the lag between your control and the movement of the ship itself, enabling you to turn rapidly and make stunningly accurate hits.

Force shockwave
This amazing power will quite simply vaporize smaller enemies, and do serious damage to any of the larger ships encountered. Use with caution.



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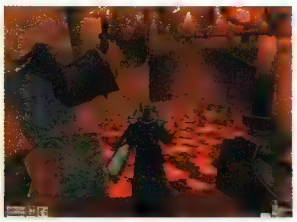
xpert tip

the elder scrolls: morrowind

20 trainer locations revealed.

TRAINER	SKILL	LOCATION
Senydie	Acrobatics	Fighters quarters–Vivec arena
Chriditte	Alchemy	Propyln Chamber–Stronghold Valenvaryon
Relas	Alteration	Relas's house–Tel Branora
Saccus	Armourer	Hawkmoth Garrison–Ebonheart
Hainnabibi	Athletics	Adibeal's Yurt–camp S of Molag Mar
Elf-Hewer	Axe	Upper Level–Stronghold Falensarano
Shardie	Block	Courtyard Fort–Outside Ald'Rhun
Henim	Blunt Weapon	St.Delyn Abby–Plaza, Vivec
Seran	Conjuration	Bottom of Ald'Rhun Temple
Birian	Destruction	By farmhouse–East of Pelegiad
Qorwynn	Enchant	By exit of stronghold Indoranyon
Omothan	Hand to hand	SW room bottom of Holamayan monastery
Seanwen	Heavy Armour	Arena Fighters Training–Vivec
Darothril	Illusion	Muriel's Cornerclub–Sadrith Mora
Aerin	Light Armour	Andus Tradehouse–Maar Gan
Drathan	Long Blade	Armigers Stronghold–Molag Mar
Akin	Marksman	Hut above Falasmaryon stronghold
Timsar-Dadisan	Mercantile	Zainab Ashlander camp
Ardarume	Mysticism	West end Gateway Inn, Sadrith Mora
Bael	Restoration	Vos Chapel, SE centre



SECRET SERVICE

Germanian Team
Beat the Germania level in advanced tournament mode.

Egyptian Team
Beat the Alexandria level in advanced tournament mode.
Max Stubbs, Northamptonshire

HALO
Find your friends in co-op
It's easy to get separated in the heat of battle, and you won't stand much of a chance alone, so use this handy trick to locate each other when you stray from the fold. Drop two plasma grenades a couple of seconds apart on the same spot on the ground. When the first explodes, it will send the second rocketing skywards, where it should, if timed correctly, explode at the apex of its jump. The height gained will send the grenade higher than the biggest cliffs you encounter in the game, so you should have no trouble contacting each other once more.
Keith Sommers, Florida

BLOOD OMEN 2
Kill the third boss with ease
The third boss can cause more trouble than he's worth, so here's the grief-free way of flooring him. Let him kill you, then restart and *don't press anything*. That's right. His exposure to the gas means he will gradually die by himself, leaving you free to have a cuppa, feed the dog or watch *EastEnders*.
Lee Goodman, Somerset

XGAMER SECRET SERVICE

Discovered a sneaky cheat or tip in a game? Broken into a secret area or sabotaged the game physics? Then tell us! We'll print the coolest finds of the month and give a top prize to the best.

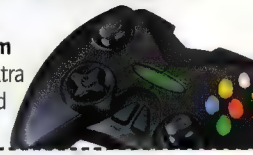
Name _____
Address _____

Game name _____
My discovery is _____

Send to: On XGamer's Secret Service, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.
or email: xgamer@futurenet.co.uk

JOYTECH®

The best reader tip bags a multiplayer starter kit from Joytech (consists of three extra pads, a system link cable and an RGB SCART cable. Nice.)



ROTTING AWAY IN PRISONER OF WAR? TURN OVER

xpert tips: buffy the vampire slayer

buffy the vampire slayer

NECK-IT! FANGS ALOT

Dig out XGamer 07 for our 10 page guide to buffing up your slaying skills. Includes maps and tips for nailing the trickiest vamps. Missed it? Call Back Issues on 0870 444 8462.

Be a star slayer and uncover all of Buffy's best kept secrets.

The puzzles in *Buffy* won't exactly challenge the average bod on the street, but each level does boast a number of secrets, carefully tucked away in the lesser known crannies. Fear not, slayer. Help's at hand as we reveal the number of secrets stashed in each location (in brackets) and where to find them.

spanish mission, canyon (1)

1. In the room with the bales of hay, use the bales to climb to the higher level. Kick through the boarded up window and climb on the roof.

high school, gymnasium (1)

1. After talking to Willow, descend the stairs and use the door the man gets thrown through. Open the ajar locker in the third set on the right.

high school, courtyard (1)

1. At the end of the level, instead of going down the stairs to the Boiler Room, ascend them and turn right at the top. Enter the classroom on the right and go to the fallen desk.

high school, boiler room (2)

1. At the start of the level, go right and up a step. On the right is a hidden cupboard.
2. After turning on the electricity, use the key-card to open the door. Follow the corridor until you come to a ladder. Carefully enter the burning room at the top.

high school, library (1)

1. At the start of the level, use the stairs and enter the classroom to the right of the Razorback's sign. Open the ajar cupboard at the back.

the bronze, nightclub (2)

1. Climb the stairs in the nightclub and you'll see a secret by the table.
2. After leaving the nightclub, you'll reach some stairs. Turn around at the top to see a platform you can jump onto.

the bronze, exterior (3)

1. Use the canister to climb onto the roof area. When you reach a skylight, drop through it to discover a secret room.
2. Open the double-doors in the secret room.
3. After shimmying across the first pole, you'll see a secret on the window ledge.

the bronze, back alleys (2)

1. Use the door the first Hellhound comes from and kick the boarded up doorway.
2. After killing the vampire throwing Hellfire, turn right and smash up the three boxes.

the bronze, railroad (2)

1. Walk left along the railway track, avoiding the train. Look for a gap on the left.
2. After shimmying across the pole by the vampire throwing Hellfire, smash up the boxes on the right.

cemetery, entrance (3)

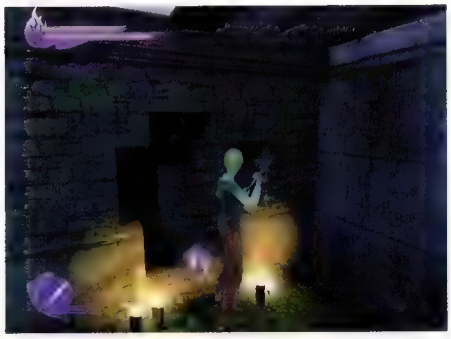
1. At the start of the level, turn around and use the steps. Smash the cruciform headstone on your right.
2. Use the Caretaker's Key to go out to the gloomy graveyard and ascend the steps on the right. Enter the crypt to your right.
3. Jump straight down the hole the mutant vampire makes in the floor.

cemetery, graveyard (3)

1. Pass through the first set of gates, go left and kick the wall by the candles.
2. Follow the path to an open crypt in the far right corner and look inside.
3. After the two vampires, you'll fight two skeletons. Look in the hole they crawl from.

cemetery, crypts (3)

1. Kill the Hellhound and the two skeletons, then search the hole the skeletons came from for something rather useful.
2. Kill the skeletons in the circle of blue energy, then walk up the steps. Kick the wall by the candles.
3. Take the other steps in the graveyard to two graves. Behind one is a secret.



mausoleum, secret passageways (3)

1. By the first switch in the level, there's a statue with pictures on either side. Kick through the right one.
2. In the left tomb, when the wall opens and the female skeleton appears, kick the exposed brick wall at the top of the steps.
3. In the right-hand tomb, a pair of skeletons jump out of two coffins by the wall switch. Climb into the coffin on the left.

mausoleum, the catacombs (2)

1. After lighting the first two bowls, there are steps you have to jump across to reach the third bowl. Look down and you'll see a hidden ledge.

sunken church, west wing (2)

1. When you reach a statue with two gravestones next to it, kick in the gravestones.
2. After lighting the second bowl, turn around, fight the two Demons then kick through the exposed brick wall on your right.

sunken church, baptistry (2)

1. In the hallway where the man is killed by the Demon, kick the base of the fallen pillar by his mutilated corpse.
2. After the stairs with the hole in, you'll reach a room with a staircase. Push the white wall switch on the right, under the torch.

xpert tips: buffy the vampire slayer

mansion, main hall (2)

1. Find and insert the green key and go through the green door, to the garden. On your right are two diamond switches. Push the second one.
2. When you reach Angel's training room, press the wall switch to open the shutters. Kick through the window and climb out. Push the switch on the wall and return to the garden at the start.

docks, shipping (2)

1. Downstairs, near the start of the level, is a kitchen. Open the cupboard under the microwave.
2. Instead of using the cargo, jump across the boxes floating in the water and climb the ladder.

docks, wharf (2)

1. Out on the wharf, walk to the far right-hand side. A ledge leads to a secret.
2. Walk through the building at the top of the ramp, then turn left. Open the grill door on the left.

docks, crane (2)

1. Use the door the vampire bursts through and follow the walkway over a bridge. Climb onto the first stack of three boxes, jump to the stack of five boxes, then to the stack of three. Jump on the sloping roof for a secret.
2. Use the valve to activate the sprinkler system, then look behind the wooden crates that were on fire.

library, gang meeting 5 (2)

1. When you kill the Demon, the door next to the desk will open. In the room on the left is a secret.
2. Use the steps to the left of the gang and go to the second free-standing bookcase. Push the book sticking out to open another door.

high school, hallway (3)

1. Use the hole the Demon makes in the toilet floor, collect the key-card and climb the ladder. Return to the toilets.
2. Use the key-card to the courtyard and take the red double-doors ahead. In the Nurse's Office, climb through the broken mirror and open the cupboard.
3. Ascend the steps by the door that leads to the courtyard. At the top, jump straight over the wall on the right to a ledge, then climb over the railing at the end.

high school, sewers (5)

1. At the start of the level, turn slightly left and kick through the red boiler where it glows pink.
2. In the first room with green water, use the ladder and cross the water. Kick the wall where it glows blue. Rather conveniently.
3. In the second room with green water, use the ladder and enter the large pipe.
4. Exit the pipe and go to the platform on the far left. Kick the wall on your left.
5. Exit the room with the normal water, go down a couple of steps and enter the gap the Demon jumps from.

high school, basement (3)

1. At the start of the level, turn around and open the white double-doors.
2. After going up two flights of stairs, go right and enter the cubicle in the men's toilets.
3. In the Boiler Room, follow the walkway to the red double-doors and break the wooden box.

foundry, yard (4)

1. Enter the building with the conveyor belt room and take the door on the left. Ascend the ladder, follow the ledge to some crates and smash the box.
2. After visiting the conveyor belt room, the shutters to the building at the end of the yard will open. Break the boxes inside.
3. To the left of this building is a stack of four crates. Climb on top of them and break the box on top.

foundry, elevator (5)

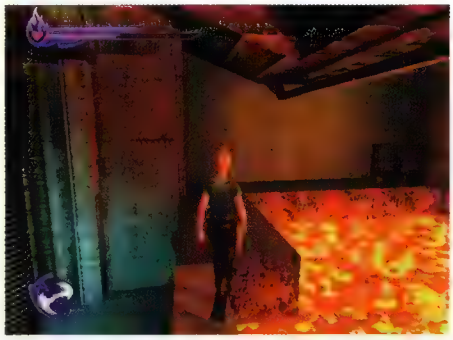
1. At the start of the level, use the steps and open the fourth locker along in the first set.
2. Exit the door originally blocked by the steam, pass through the next room and use the stairs. Turn around at the bottom and kick through the wall by the dead man.
3. In the room with the lever that opens the exit hatch, open the second locker along in the second row of lockers.
4. Exit this room, follow the gangway and continue along the pipe ahead. Use the hatch and follow the walkway.
5. Drop back down to the floor and enter the hole the Hanoch Demons have made in the wall.

foundry, conveyor system (2)

1. After pulling the lever to open the door, you climb a ladder and fight two Demons. Kick the wall on the right to reveal a secret.

foundry, ore processing (2)

1. At the start of the level, descend the ladder and walk along the ledge by the molten metal. Behind the two flammable containers is a secret.
2. After the Demon jumps up through the walkway and you use the grill door, climb up to the higher level, jump across to the walkway then drop back down to the pipe below. Kick through the wall on the right-hand side.



sunken church, tunnels (1)

1. Kick through the wall opposite the three switches.

sunken church, fire bridge (1)

1. Once across the bridge, walk right and drop down by the fallen pillar. Kick the wall where it glows blue.

sunken church, east wing (3)

1. At the start of the level, descend the stairs. Kick through the wall on the right, after the torches.
2. Cross the first pillar and look down the hole.
3. In the end hall with the windows, turn around at the bottom of the stairs. Kick the wall on the right.

dreamers' realm, maze (1)

1. After jumping the gap in the floor you'll reach a gap with a Hellfire font on the other side. Use the moving platform to jump across—and go right.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

Your mission, if you can be arsed to accept it, is to uncover the four remaining secrets in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. The first person out of our Resistance beret receives a copy of this month's stunning cover game *Turok: Evolution*. email **xgamer@futurenet.co.uk** with the header **'Buffy's Missing Bits' Compo**, or snailmail **XGamer Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW**. Closing date: 23 September

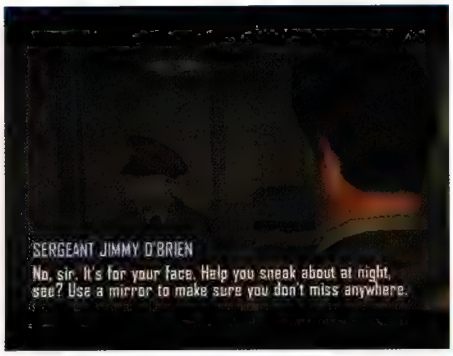
IN-DEPTH PRISONER OF WAR TIPS OVERLEAF...

xpert tips: prisoner of war

prisoner of war

HOLD ME!
Still having trouble escaping the holding camp? Ignore the guide's advice and try different times of day for each operation. Searchlights are your problem by night, but there are more guards by day.

Resistance is never useless. Not with our expert guide to pulling off the great escape.



MISSION ONE: CAPTURED!

Location: Border Holding Camp

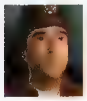
Camp Overview:
With just four inmates, this is only a small holding camp and easily completed. Use it to practise the basics of sneaking and hiding, and to familiarise yourself with the mechanics of the camp routines and prisoner actions. The most important basic lesson, recurring throughout, is to always plan your covert ops around roll calls—that way you'll never be missed and caught.

Friendly Faces

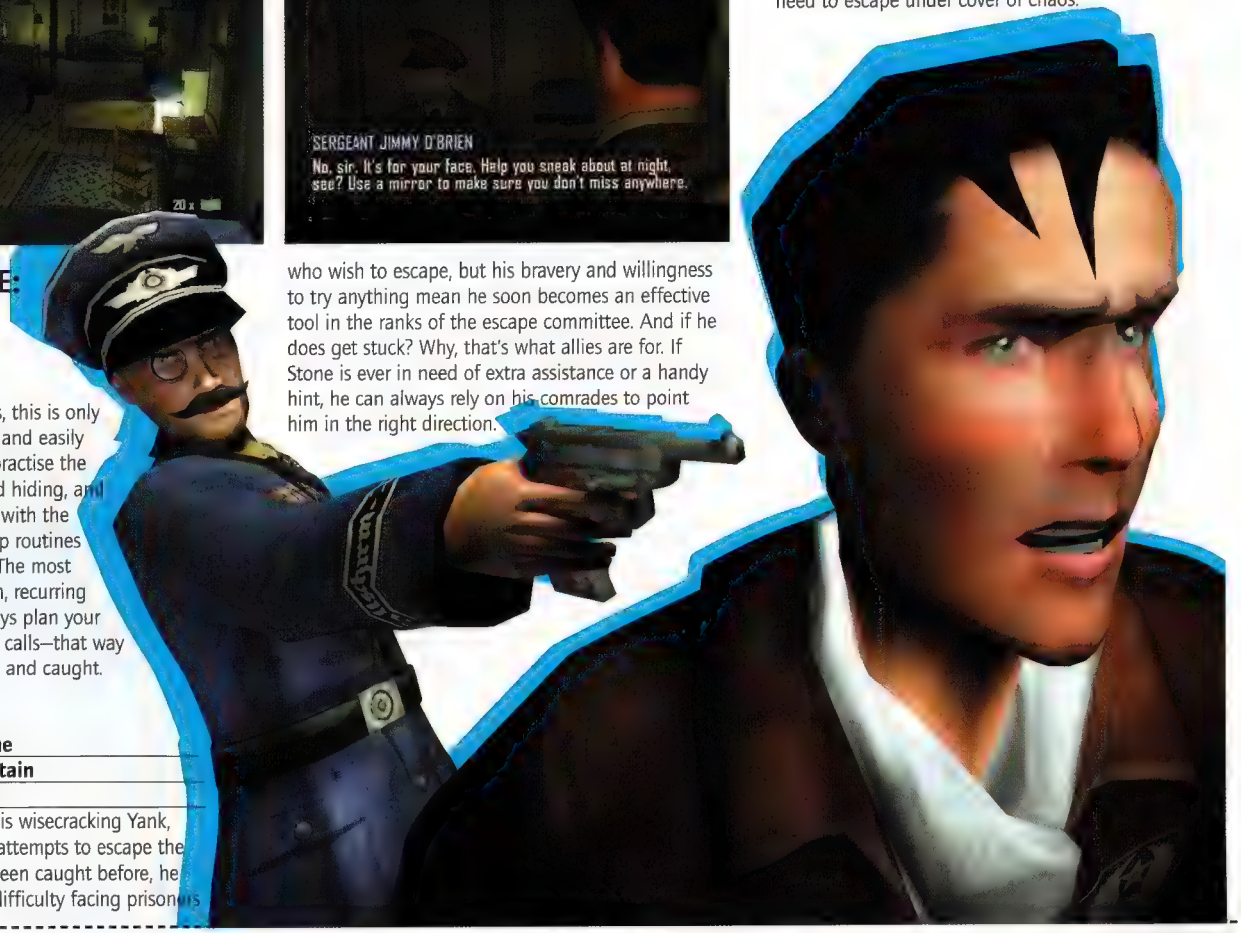
Lewis Stone
Rank: Captain
Role: you
You play this wisecracking Yank, and guide him in his attempts to escape the Reich. Having never been caught before, he has little idea of the difficulty facing prisoners who wish to escape, but his bravery and willingness to try anything mean he soon becomes an effective tool in the ranks of the escape committee. And if he does get stuck? Why, that's what allies are for. If Stone is ever in need of extra assistance or a handy hint, he can always rely on his comrades to point him in the right direction.

Paul Clancy
Rank: Private
Role: General help
An expert on prison camps and their mechanics, but has been involved in so many failed escape attempts that his fighting spirit is gone. Expect plenty of advice, but not direct help from this depressed soul.

Jimmy O'Brien
Rank: Sergeant
Role: General help
This Irish lad is always pleased to help you, and continually surprises with his intricate knowledge of the camp, its layout and guards, but he refuses to leave without Clancy.



James Daly
Rank: Flight lieutenant
Role: Distractions
Best friend of Stone, he will arrive shortly after you—although his reason for capture may be a little less than sincere, he's glad to help you out and will even cause a distraction if you need to escape under cover of chaos.



Mission one walkthrough

HELLO BOOTIFUL

The boot polish can be used throughout the game for night operations. Never leave without first applying it (always in front of a mirror), as it dramatically reduces the chances of you being spotted.

You've spoken to everyone and familiarised yourself with the camp layout, right? Then dump your kitbag and let's blow this joint.

1. Getting O'Brien's currency
O'Brien's looking for some currency to deal with the guards, and he wants you to get it from the sickbay. Simply wait until mealtime and head round the back of the mess hall, wait for the patrolling guard to pass and nip over the wall. Grab all the flashing items from inside sickbay (including the office) and cautiously return the same way before mealtime ends.

2. The escape plan
Give the currency to O'Brien and you'll receive some boot polish, and JD will also arrive at the camp. O'Brien will tell you of the plan to escape: You need to steal a brass key from the German quarters, which will give you access to the north-west tool shed, from which you can get a crowbar which can be used to break open the drivers quarters' doors, access the truck compound and escape.

3. All keyed up
Timeskip to morning exercise and ask JD to cause a disturbance. Then nip over the north fence at the eastern-most point and run into the German barracks opposite while they are unguarded. Grab the brass key from inside, then leave the same way—this time using the crouch function to avoid attracting the attention of the guard in front of the door.

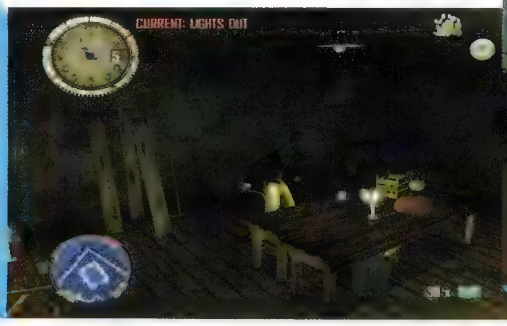
4. Crowbar capers
Return to O'Brien to purchase the telescope and skip to lights out. Use the mirror to apply your boot polish and go out into the night—the keyhole view will help you keep an eye on the night guard. Head around to the west side of the barracks, and cross the fence to the north when the two guards are talking at the east end of the compound. Go straight across the road and through the hole in the wall opposite. From here, crouch and use cover to move across the open ground around the searchlights, then move slowly round the building (to avoid waking the slumbering guard) and use your brass key to get inside and grab the crowbar. Now return before morning roll call.

5. Escape!
A few hints from JD before retiring to your barracks, and you're set to go. At lights out, grab all your items except for the kitbag and apply your boot polish. Leave your barrack and immediately crouch down and hide under it. Now face east, and when both patrolling guards are walking away, make your move over two fences, to reach the German barracks area.

From here, head over the north fence and use the sandbags as cover until you can cross the road to the drivers quarters. Use your crowbar on the door, and sneak through the room to the door opposite.

6. Final run
Now outside, turn left and use the stack of barrels to take temporary shelter from the roving searchlight. When you're ready, dive under the jeep to your left. A solitary guard is patrolling your location, but his route gives you plenty of time to go past the red brick wall and under the next vehicle to the south-west. Continue to creep west under two more cars and you will see the objective to your right, the escape truck.

The easiest way to go is to make a break for it between the two searchlights when the guard's back is turned, but if this is too difficult, then wait until morning—after the search following the morning roll call (which won't find you if you keep right under the car) the searchlights will have gone off and you can easily make your way to the truck.



Xpert tips: prisoner of war

MISSION TWO: PRISONER OF WAR

Location: Stalag Luft I

Camp Overview:

Far larger than your last home, this place is the real deal. The end of the road. Or perhaps not. With Mission one and last month's tips mastered, you should now be fully equipped to tackle this fenced fortress with relative ease. As ever, an intimate knowledge of the camp is essential, so spend your first few days exploring it and revealing the map. Pick up any currency you spot along the way. A new addition to this one and every subsequent camp is a 'crew' of three prisoners who can be bribed (for 25 currency) to distract the guards for you.

Friendly Faces

James Temple Smithson
Rank: Wing commander
Role: Escape Committee member

Head of this camp and happy to give you work after your escape from the holding camp. Willing to sanction most escape ideas and always looking on the bright side of things.

Nicoli Radtke
Rank: Major
Role: EC leader

Suspicious of you at first, this Pole may seem to have more than a few misgivings about your arrival on the Stalag Luft escape scene, but as you prove your worth, he'll come to like you and may prove invaluable in providing sources of advice for the less able player.

Harry 'The Scrounger' Fox
Rank: Sergeant
Role: Scrounger

Can get hold of most of the standard items available in the camp, from boot polish to keys. However, these are often only available once you've acquired these items yourself, making the scrounger the easiest and quickest way to recover items that are confiscated when you are inevitably captured.

Mickey Malone
Rank: Private
Role: Currency multiplier

This smooth-talking NY gambler is all too ready to sweet-talk you into trying his dice game. On the plus side, you can easily make a lot of currency from only a small initial amount—which could prove more efficient than searching the camp to find contraband. Flip side of the coin: you could lose all your currency. Permanently.

Charlie Wilson
Rank: Private
Role: Currency multiplier

Like Malone, only his methods are less unscrupulous; the odds of his stone-throwing game are balanced in your favour. There is an easy version in the barracks area, and a harder version in the exercise yard—although you can earn more currency winning this harder version.

Jonathan Fielding
Rank: Flight lieutenant
Role: 'Crew' member

Can be bribed to distract guards.

Henry Plunkett
Rank: Private
Role: 'Crew' member

Can be bribed to distract guards.

Olivier Vermaas
Rank: Private
Role: 'Crew' member

Can be bribed—yep, you guessed it—to distract guards. Fancy that...

Peter Nesbitt
Rank: Lieutenant
Role: General help

Can fill you in on camp gossip and the comings and goings that are taking place. More useful when you return here later in the game, and he can fill you in on the 'evolution' of the level.

John McCormack
Rank: Second lieutenant
Role: General help

With yet more help on life in the camp, this chap provides the most useful information for those players still having trouble handling those eagle-eyed Nazi guards.

Xavier DuChamp
Rank: Private
Role: General help

This friend is not only helpful, but also rather likeable. And French too. Whatever the reason, talk to him if you are having trouble finding and using currency.

Roger Harding
Rank: Colonel
Role: Hostile ally

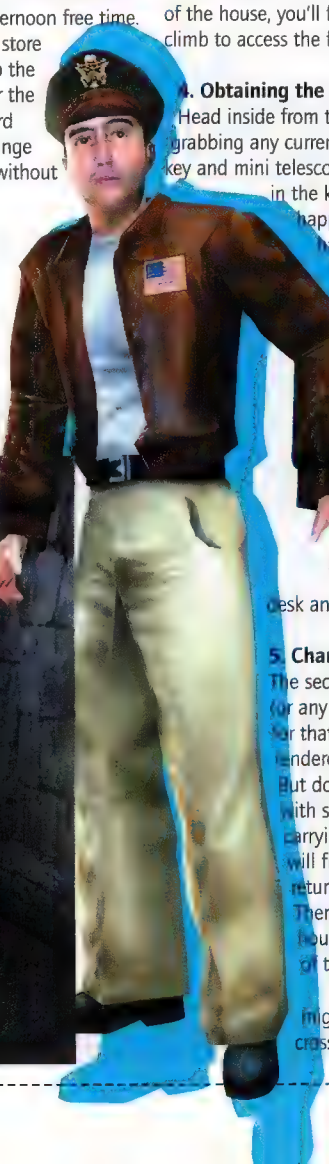
This mysterious chap has no time for you, and hangs around only by himself. Perhaps his secret will be revealed as the game progresses...

Mission two walkthrough

1. Proving your worth
Once you have taken note of the above, and checked out your own new home, Barrack two, head over to Barrack four to be briefed by the Escape Committee on your first task—playing a tape over the loudspeaker system. Grab the tape from your hiding place and hurry on over to the next meal. Jump over the north fence behind the mess hall, and throw stones at the metal bins here to distract the guard. This should give you ample time to run inside the administration building and play the tape on the loudspeaker system. On the return journey, use the keyhole view to check on the guard's position, then return to the mess hall before the meal ends to tell the EC of your success.

2. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em
To get the documents mentioned in the cut-scene, a German patrol uniform will make things a whole lot less complicated. Get the brass key you have been given from your barracks and head to the west fence of the barracks compound during afternoon free time. The guard patrolling the front of the store opposite gives you ample time to top the fence and use your brass key to enter the store. In here you'll find a patrol guard uniform and a mirror to help you change into it. Now you can leave the store without hassle and return to your barrack.

3. Behind enemy lines
Your new uniform will let you easily reach the Kommandant's house in the north-east of the camp, but be sure you aren't seen crossing fences, because this will make other guards suspicious. Enter the south gate and go anti-clockwise round the house to avoid the watchful eye of the lieutenant patrolling the front door. When you reach the north-west corner of the house, you'll find a drainpipe which you can climb to access the first floor of the house.



4. Obtaining the documents
Head inside from the balcony and go downstairs, grabbing any currency you pass as well as the iron key and mini telescope from the landing table. Once in the kitchen, the chef won't be too happy about your presence, so don't hang around. The door at the bottom of the stairs gives direct access to the Kommandant's office, but this is covered by a guard who will instantly recognise you. Instead, follow the west corridor round past the front entrance and hide behind the bookcase in the office. Then it's simply a matter of waiting for the Kommandant to leave and you can cross the room to his desk and steal the vital documents.

5. Change of plan
The second you collect the documents (or any other hand object in the game, for that matter), your disguise will be rendered useless until you drop it. But don't think you can get away with simply dropping the item you're carrying if a guard approaches—he will find the item on the floor and return it to its original position. Therefore, you'll need to leave the house the way you came (by way of the drainpipe).

The return isn't as hard as you might anticipate. You can either cross the west road into the mess hall

xpert tips: prisoner of war

Mission two walkthrough...cont

compound and hide out until mealtime when you can contact the EC—this will save you actually returning to the barracks yourself. Alternatively, go south from the house—there's only one guard to contend with, and a well-placed stone ahead of him will enable you to easily cross the eastern fence of the barracks area while he's preoccupied. Either way, be sure to inform the EC of your success, who'll give you your next objective.

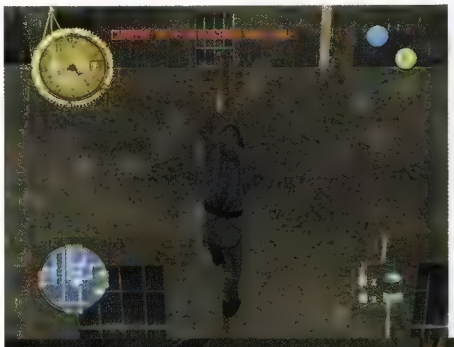
6. Blow hard

The escape tunnel, intended for use in the mass escape of the soldiers, needs ventilation, and for this, you'll need to find a pair of bellows. Easily done: at the next possible mealtime, head around to the west side of the mess hall, remaining crouched to avoid the view of the guard in the watchtower. Unlock the side door to the kitchen using the iron key you acquired in the Kommandant's house. Look through the keyhole until the chef turns away from the door, then head inside and immediately turn left (relative to the camera change) and crouch straight down out of sight. Here you will find the bellows on a small table. Then simply head back outside and enter the mess hall through the main entrance to tell the EC the good news.

7. Fumbling in the dark

From the catastrophe of the tunnel collapse in the cut-scene, you're told of an abandoned tunnel that could be the last chance for you to get out of Stalag Luft. Luckily, it's a doddle compared to what you've been through so far.

After lights out, grab the keys you have (and the telescope if you feel the need) and stick on your enemy uniform. But you'll have to be damned fast. You need to leave your barracks in time to shadow the Kommandant as he goes home following the evening roll call. In this way, you can exit the barracks area in his wake as the gates are opened for him. As soon as you get through the gates, leap over the opposite fence into the mess hall, and again north until you reach the far side of the admin building. Wait for the guard in the search tower to look away and you'll be able to cross the wall to the west. Here is the utility shed—you can use your iron key to get inside and take a crowbar, although as ever, it renders your disguise ineffective for the rest of the mission.



SCOPE 'EM OUT!

The telescope enables you to scope out a guard's patrol pattern and, second, to check watchtower guards (important when you're in enemy uniform—a sly lieutenant could be watching you...).

8. Prisoner no more

The disguise problem isn't as bad as it sounds, though—the truck compound has a Lieutenant in it so losing your cover is no great loss. Leave the utility room and head through the hole in the wall to the north that Radtke may have informed you of.

Use the vehicles as cover from the spotlights and guards and you'll soon reach the objective—an abandoned building to the south, with three doors. The first and third rooms are empty, but the second, opened with the crowbar, contains a trapdoor in the north-west corner, which opens onto the tunnel, and, uh, freedom...?

Well, commiserations. Looks like the Reich intend to prolong your stay just a bit longer...

DRESS TO IMPRESS

A German uniform will only let you pass guards of the same rank or lower, and even then only if they don't get the chance to scrutinize your face too closely. A Lieutenant or Kommandant will see straight through your disguise.

MISSION 3: CASTLE COLDITZ

Location: Three guesses; first two don't count...
Camp Overview:
Don't be too disheartened that you've arrived in the most secure German fortress known to man for the duration of the war. There must be some way out, right? In the meantime, while your fellow EC members work on the escape plan, there are other problems which you would do well to turn your attention to, namely contacting Colonel Harding and getting some answers. A quick word of caution, though: Colditz's German quarters are far more distinct than in previous camps, and all entrance routes to them are exceptionally well guarded. For this reason, you may wish to leave the exploration of these areas until it becomes strictly necessary to do so.

Friendly Faces

Henry Dubois
Rank: Group Captain
Role: Barracks leader/EC
A chap disheartened—and rightly so—by the seemingly impossible prospect of ever escaping from the indomitable Colditz. But with your arrival comes new hope, and he's willing to do everything he can to help you undermine the Colditz record of no exfiltrations, ever.

William Kingsley
Rank: Major
Role: Head of EC
Kingsley recognises the realities of trying to escape from Colditz but, on the other hand, is more than happy to help you disrupt the castle from the inside. On this front, he isn't adverse to a bit of currency; contraband will coax the odd handy hint out of him for each objective. But *don't* expect miracles—Colditz security is far more intense than anything you have encountered thus far, so expect any recon to be limited.

Dwight Johnson
Rank: Private
Role: Scrounger
Can get hold of even more wild and wonderful bits and pieces than on previous levels—at a price. Of course, you will often have to have located them first, which makes his function purely utilitarian.

Tony Caponi
Rank: Private
Role: Currency multiplier
Another gambling shark, who claims to be far more honest than "that no good swindler Mickey Malone". So, naturally, his card game is even harder than Mickey's dice game, although it's still a fun diversion from the tribulations of escaping, and there's always the chance that you'll win it big.

Douglas 'Sure Shot' Spears
Rank: Corporal
Role: Currency multiplier
This man is the reason why you may have to take the risk of gambling with Caponi to gain extra currency. The stone-throwing game is now much harder—but with fewer stones, less time, and multiple targets at different heights. A devil's job to win, then, but immensely rewarding if you do, as the currency rewards comparative to your potential losses, are substantially decreased over Toni's game.

Luke Beratti
Rank: Private
Role: 'Crew' member
Surely you've got it by now. No? Okay, he can be bribed for 25 currency to distract guards.

Dick Williams
Rank: Second Lieutenant
Role: 'Crew' member
He too can be bribed for 25 currency.

Ricki Logan
Rank: Flight Lieutenant
Role: 'Crew' member
Yup, you guessed it, hand the guy 25 currency and the guards are soon hoodwinked.

Michael Kapowski
Rank: Private
Role: General help
This taciturn private is only really of much use in your initial objectives. He'll tell you of the secret passage in the library and the uses of the lock pick. Other than that, he's a last resort for information, considering the wide range of other sources on offer. Try them out instead.

Reginald Worthington
Rank: Second Lieutenant
Role: General help
Sometimes he's a bit non-specific in his help is our Reggie, but this hardy Brit will occasionally provide some of the most excellent and invaluable advice in the game. Always worth a chat if you need inspiration—you may strike lucky.

Cameron 'Doc' Winters
Rank: Lieutenant
Role General help
One of the best and most consistent sources of good advice inside Colditz, this wise guy knows the place like the back of his hand, and will always be able to clue you in on many unknown locations before you go blindly wandering into them, unaware of what to look out for...

Roger Harding
Rank: Colonel
Role: Ally....?
You catch up with this stiff again in your trip to castle Colditz, and one of your initial tasks will be to contact him. This mission should at least hint at his importance in the overall scheme—just why is he so heavily guarded? And does he really want to help you out?

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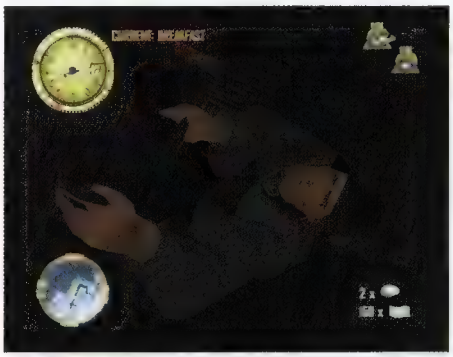
Mission three walkthrough



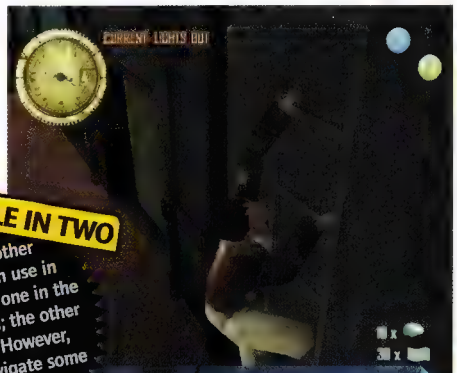
1. Between a rock and a hard place
As usual, there are multiple ways to do the given task of reaching Harding. Unfortunately, the level of security at Colditz means that none really stand out above the others. Our route takes a long time to complete, so speed will be even more key than usual. It also contains the most guards, but this won't be a problem as our guide will tell you how to overcome each one as we go along.

2. Rooftop rambling
We reckon this one'll have to be a night op. Don't worry about the lack of boot polish in your possession—you'll spend this mission indoors anyway. After evening roll call, wait in your barracks and use the keyhole view to listen for the night guard walking over to his chair to catch 40 winks. As soon as he does, grab the lockpick you've been told about off his desk, and head through the door by the sleeping guard's side. Head upstairs, and throw a stone at the next guard—trust us, if he doesn't see who threw it, he'll sit down and go to sleep. Head past him into the north library, and use the table as cover to get upstairs. Wait behind the bookcase until the guard here leaves the window, then climb through it onto the rooftops. Follow the balcony round until you reach a new window you can go through.

3. Theatrical performance
Head down the ladder at the end of this corridor—don't worry, the cut-scene that plays doesn't affect you at this point. Ignore its deplorable cheesiness and go through the door on your right. Head downstairs as the guard walks away from you, then use the curtain to avoid him on the return journey. As soon as he passes, run through the door into the theatre itself and onto the stage, where you can go down a trapdoor to the left.

4. That's barracks
Leave this room immediately and turn left to enter the SOE guard room—which contains Harding's personal guard. Luckily, he is rather incompetent (as previous cut-scenes have hinted), and a well-placed knock on any item in the room will enable you to circle around the furniture (crouching) while he investigates the noise, and then you can skip happily in to meet Harding.

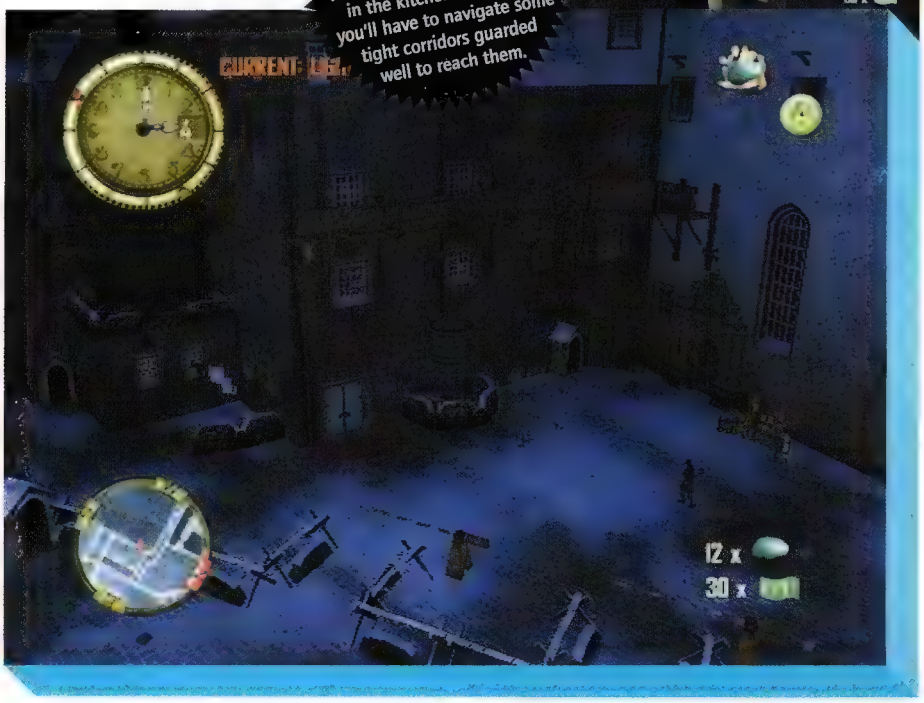
5. Laundry service
The Colonel isn't overjoyed to see you, but your mutual necessity to escape means he will, for the time being, collaborate. The cut-scene will return Stone to Barrack A for you, so now wait until the next afternoon freetime and locate the laundry (all the rooms are clearly labelled here). Ask a chum to cause a distraction, then use the keyhole view to check on the guard in the hallway. As he walks

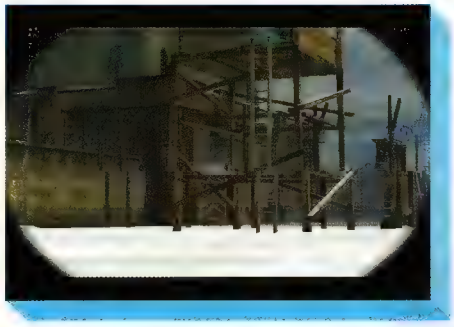


HOLE IN TWO
There are two other manholes you can use in your final escape— one in the prisoner courtyard; the other in the kitchens. However, you'll have to navigate some tight corridors guarded well to reach them.

SNEAK LIKE SNAKE

When you do eventually brave the German guards here at forbidden times, you'll be overwhelmed if unprepared. It would be unfeasible to talk you past each one—most operations require time spent observing guard patrols at any given time, coupled with lightning reactions to cope with evolving situations. The best advice? Never make a move until you are positive it will be a successful one.





upstairs, go inside and through the door to your right (which you can open using the brass key Harding left in your secret place) and into the laundry room. Sadly, there's no Shakira, but almost as good is the enemy uniform on the table to the north-west. You can put it on there and then, by using the mirror in the south-west corner, simply walk over to Harding's area wearing it—the guards won't bat an eyelid.

6. Sickeningly easy

There are two sets of travel papers you can now obtain—one batch in the German admin office from the recently dismissed guard of Harding; the second in the sickbay. Since the sickbay papers are nearer and do not involve entering German-only territory, these are the ones you should be aiming to get. During morning exercise, go into the belltower (the unmarked door immediately west of the laundry) and ascend the ladder. Through the door at the top, you'll see the sickbay, as well as a guard who patrols this room and the next. When he disappears, go through the door and behind the curtain in the north-west corner. A guard here is laid up ill, and you can don his unused uniform. This makes it easier to pick up the travel papers on the sickbay desk, and walk through the laundry front door back to the EC HQ in Barrack A.

7. Into the lion's den

To get the manhole tool mentioned after you return the travel papers to the EC, you'll have to enter the German quarters. Leave the prisoner mess hall through the door to the north during breakfast and cross the German mess hall. If you haven't done so already, don't panic, it's simply a case of hugging the south wall while crouching to avoid the watchful gaze of the two circling guards, or using the underside of the tables as a hiding spot. Once in the admin office, head through the door to the north and down the stairs—you'll find the manhole tool on a small table to your right. Don't worry about the heavy guard presence in the courtyard—their patrol routes are large enough to make their presence a formality. Although it's worth noting that the uniform will be useless here as there are patrolling Lieutenants.

8. The (not so) great escape

Your stay on Colditz will end with a dignified stroll through the sewers. Clutching your newly acquired manhole tool, head back into the German mess hall and use it on the trapdoor in the north-west corner. Then follow the passage west round a few corners to escape with the ever ungrateful Harding.

GET GOODIES

Don't always wait for the guide to tell you when to acquire items. If you're exploring each level thoroughly, as we recommend, then you should find all manner of useful items and contraband en route. Often these are objects you're expected to locate as standard in the later missions of the game—life-saving accoutrements like boot polish and the telescope, for instance.

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Mission four walkthrough

MISSION 4: SABOTAGE

Location: Stalag Luft Rocket facility camp

Camp Overview:

The most amazing change in this camp is the large rocket and high-tech facility that have both been built where the barn formerly was in the south-east corner of the camp. Furthermore, your new home is the former construction yard, and the old barracks area now doubles as a German storage area—but all this means is that you have to move through the exercise yard to reach the mess hall. Later on in the level, you can access the German compound behind the Kommandant's house by way of a new tunnel.

SNIFFING!

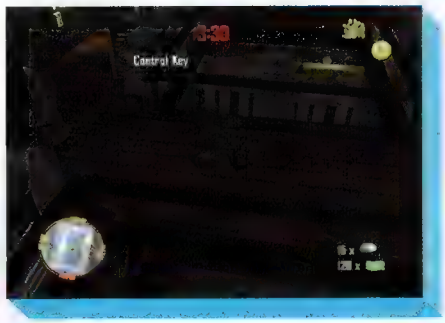
Having trouble locating some of the items mentioned? Thankfully, many occur in multiple locations—we've only mentioned the ones you can nab easily, so feel free to sniff out alternatives.

Friendly Faces

All your old friends from Stalag Luft are... still here, unsurprisingly. Luckily, this means you'll have no trouble finding additional help, should you require it. And since the security ante has been upped considerably since your last visit, it's a safe bet that you will.

1. Be prepared. Ready?

As the game becomes ever more freeform, you'll need to be prepared for anything. For this reason, we suggest you get as many items as possible at the start of this level to avoid unnecessary journeys later on in the mission. Also note that since winter has reared its ugly head, you'll now leave distinct footprints on the ground, so give guards a wider berth than usual—you'll still have plenty of time to run if they see them. Also, take some time to practise with the new catapult—it can destroy searchlights, don't you know.



2. Gear up. Set?

You'll have no trouble getting the items you need, because all are positioned in exactly the same places as in Mission two. Get the brass key from the mess hall and use this to open the storage room over the east wall of your barracks (because of the new orientation, remember). In here you'll find a uniform. Next, enter the new storage compound. The uniform is no help this time, though, thanks to the Lieutenants' presence (frustrating, isn't it?). However, there is an abundance of cover and currency, which you can use to purchase the other essentials, such as boot polish and the mini-telescope. In the north-east corner of this area is a half-built building containing a lockpick, and there's a crowbar inside Storage Building A to the south—just use the crates to avoid the guard inside.

3. Parcel Panic. Go
It's a race against time to retrieve the package before the Germans do. The EC will tell you where to find the post room if you didn't see it last time round—it's at the far east of the camp, to the north of the new facility. Your uniform allows easy daytime access, but it takes time to pick the lock. Grab the parcel (yes, it will render your disguise useless) and check the keyhole for threats before returning to barracks through the storage compound. Tell the EC in barrack four of your success.

4. Camera man
Using your uniform, head along the main road through the compound (from east to west) after morning roll call, and go through the main barrier to reach the front entrance of the high-tech facility. Head around to the west side and climb up two ladders to reach the roof of the facility. Climb over the pipes to reach the east side of the roof, from where you'll have a clear view of the half-built rocket. Use the camera you have been entrusted with, to get a snap of this view, then head over to the north-east corner of the roof. Use the ventilation shaft to enter the building.

5. Safe bet
The Lieutenant on the top floor is easily avoided, so head downstairs as he patrols. Once downstairs, shadow the Lieutenant here until he pauses at the office doorway on the east side of the room, then hide behind the jutting out filing cabinet while he returns. Once he's past, go into the office and use your lockpick to break into the safe, where you'll find the documents. Take these, and again follow the Lieutenant as he leaves the office doorway until you reach the front door, which you can now open. Saunter back along the main road to barrack four.

6. Interference
Don your uniform once more and follow the tunnel in barrack two. You will emerge in a stockroom opening onto the German compound, so grab the iron key off the wall in the courtyard. Look north-east to see a building with flags on either side of the door (mess hall) and head round the back of this building to find

TUNNEL VISION

The tunnel in barrack two is not just for use during the infiltration of the German compound. You can also use it to access other areas of the camp in safety as it develops over the course of the mission. It's best used to get out of the barracks into the storage area, thereby avoiding the need to climb a single fence in view of the many patrolling guards.

xpert tips: prisoner of war

Mission four walkthrough...cont

stairs leading up to the officers' quarters. In here you'll find a Lieutenant's uniform. But before you start strutting around in your new threads, leave the room and go into the office—the first door west of the stockroom. Throw the switch on the wall here to cut the power, then leave immediately and try to enter the admin office (left of the stockroom). A cut-scene will play, showing a sergeant coming out to see what has caused the power disturbance, so stay away from the door, then head inside as soon as he leaves. Walk slowly through the office to avoid attention, then wait in the radio room at the end. The red light here will turn green as soon as the sergeant restores power—now is your chance to send the radio message and get out of there before he returns. Use the tunnel to get back to barracks (and save your game here).

7. Uniform procedure

Immediately put on your Lieutenant's uniform and head to the facility—front door access is covered, so head in through the roof. Wait for the sergeant to walk round the south of the first floor walkway, then grab the highlighted key from the east wall and insert it into the control panel on the west. Head to the bottom floor and, using the same tactics as before, head to the office. Grab the second key off the wall and insert it into the adjacent control panel. Now enjoy the cut-scene celebrating the success of your most difficult mission yet.

MISSION 5: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

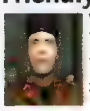
Location: That's right; Colditz

Camp Overview:

A lot of changes have taken place at Colditz since your departure, most notably your relocation to barracks B (Harding's former room), and a new fence dividing the courtyard with just one gateway in it, making it impassable when a guard is nearby.

Also note the new German quarters between the ornate mess hall and the admin office. Other than this, you'll be familiar with it: it's hell, it's Colditz. Oh, and just to add to the flavour, there's a spy at work among the allied ranks, foiling all escape attempts.

Friendly Faces

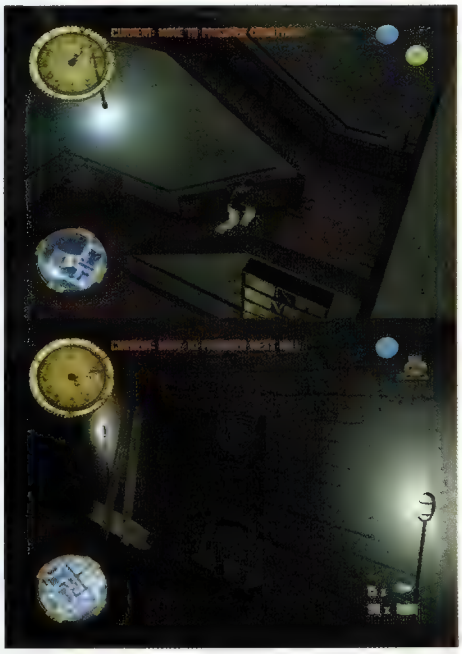


Vincent Bernier
Rank: Corporal
Role: New ally

Your new room-mate, and a shady character by all accounts. A good listener, but only if you have anything to tell. Why does he refuse to escape himself, yet relishes hearing about the plans of others? Could he be the rogue spy who has plagued the recent Colditz escape attempts?

Daniel Crown
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Role: New Ally

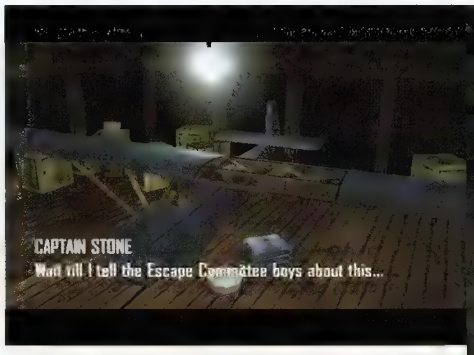
A fellow flyer, and, just like yourself, a bit cocky and immodest. He's not averse to any escape attempts either, but the work of the supposed spy recently has prevented his escaping. Yet he remains happy while everyone else is demoralised by recent events. Still, eager to help you in your cause.



Mission five walkthrough

1. Back in action
Head over to the familiar admin office (it's the door on the right in the new German lobby) and grab the brass key off the desk. Then use morning exercise to enter barrack A and open the library door. The guard here patrols right up to the door, but if you shadow him on his way up the stairs, there's a cupboard you can hide in on the first floor landing. After he passes, go into the west library (the north is now blocked off) and wait in the left-most aisle of books for the two guards to move away. As soon as they do, head to the north end of the library and up the stairs, grabbing the catapult off the table along the way. The trooper at the top of the stairs may appear to be impassable, but you can hide under the large table on the landing to dodge him. Then head through the upstairs doorway and along the deserted corridor for a distinctly worrying cut-scene...

2. Attic antics
Go through the window and climb up the rope. When you reach the top, don't forget to turn around and grab the rope and grappling hook on the end of it– they are essential. Now head through the window on this ledge to find what all the fuss has been about. Harding appears to be a resourceful man indeed...



3. Hanging about
To leave this room, head through the small chapel door (the other is locked for now) and go through the next storage room to secure your grappling hook in the belltower. Afterwards, go back into the storage room to grab the crowbar and return to tell the EC of your findings, using your new handy escape route.

4. Suit you sir
You'll be carrying handy objects so often in this mission that a uniform won't be half as useful as it used to be, but for what it's worth there's one in the main laundry/sickbay hallway that's a doddle to grab, and worth having just for the odd sneaking mission.

5. Expose the enemy
The glider needs finishing, but priority one is to reveal the spy. Return to get hold of the grappling hook at afternoon freetime, then head to the courtyard where you found the manhole tool in Mission three. To the right of where you emerge into the yard is a balcony, and a guard standing directly below it. Throw stones at the canisters underneath his position, and when he heads downstairs to check on the noise, throw your grappling hook up to the balcony and quickly climb

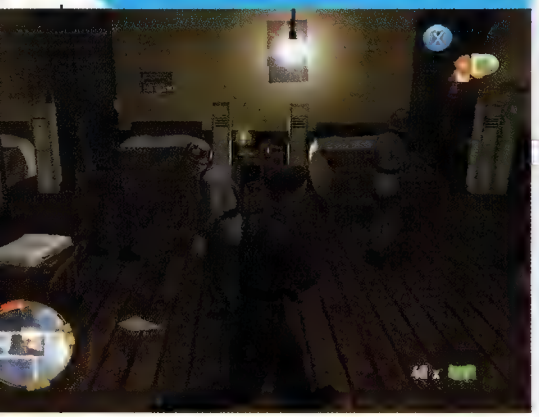
xpert tips: prisoner of war

Mission five walkthrough...cont

up (don't forget to pull it up behind you). Use the newly acquired camera to take a photo through the gap in the door (did you guess that he was the spy?) and return to reveal the spy's identity to the EC.

6. Extra parts? No sheet, Sherlock...
The EC agrees that the POW must help the SOE go AWOL. What this means is that you must now complete the glider so that you and Harding can escape, particularly as Harding's chances are reduced each time he's identified as the culprit for your misdemeanours. You'll need to find a plank, bed sheets and some electrical cables to complete the machine. Now that the spy's identity is known among all your allies, you can also talk to Worthington, 'Doc' Winters and Bernier, who will all give you hints. The plank is located in the chapel—return it to your hiding place for the time being. For the sheets, you'll need to wait until night time and cross the mess hall to the German quarters (your uniform will help on the outward journey). Head up the main stairway, and creep through the door on your left. Sneak past the sleeping guards, grab the bed sheets in the centre of the room and return to base.

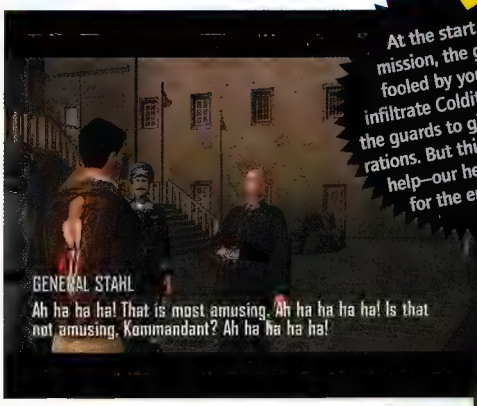
7. Live wire
Use free time to install the grappling hook once more in the belltower. Then make two swift trips with the sheets and plank and install them in the glider—a couple of distractions in the prisoner courtyard will eliminate any threats here. To obtain the electrical cable, head through the previously inaccessible attic door using the iron key the EC made for you. At the bottom of the ladder is a room full of crates. Search behind these to find the item and finish the glider.



8. Lab rat
The EC cannot let you escape until you have destroyed the secret labs underneath the castle, and

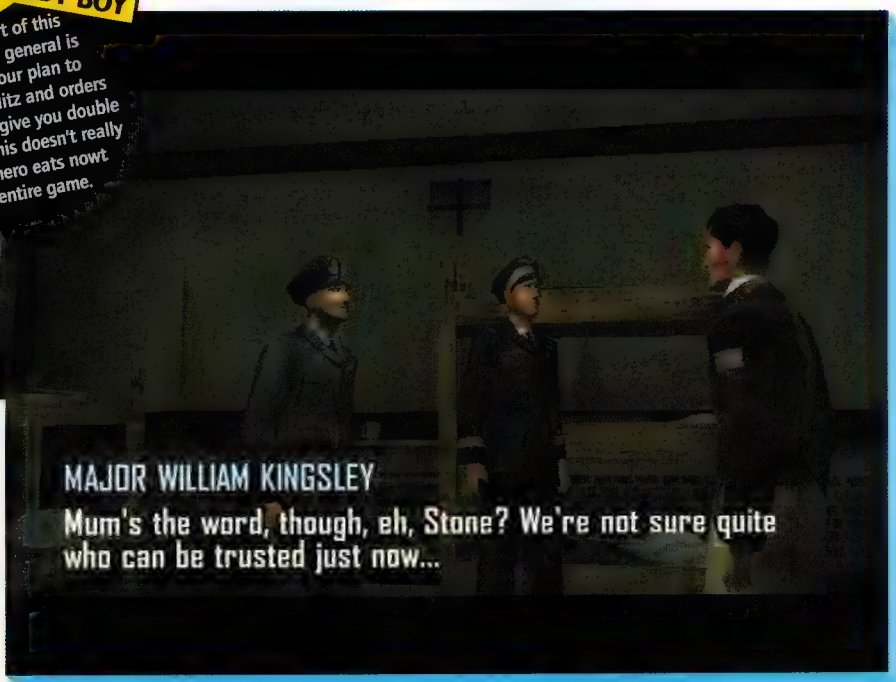
GETTING TO GRIPS

Using the grappling hook is a process of trial and error, so make sure there are no guards around when you first start throwing it at the metal ringlets. And don't leave it lying around—you can't afford to lose this item. It's vital to completing the game.



LARDY BOY

At the start of this mission, the general is fooled by your plan to infiltrate Colditz and orders the guards to give you double rations. But this doesn't really help—our hero eats nowt for the entire game.



eliminated the threat of General Stahl building another rocket. Stick on your uniform, grab every pocket item you have and head for the German quarters. In the lobby is a door on the ground floor you will not have been able to open until now—this leads to the boiler room.

Head downstairs and you'll find yourself once more in the sewers. Although there may appear to be multiple routes available here, the map will show you that, in fact, all but the one true path are deadends. There are a few Lieutenants wandering around down here, but with so much cover, they'll pose no threat to your plans. When you reach a short section of corridor with no guards in it, look for a niche in the wall containing a trap door. Head through this to find the rather large secret lab.

9. Out with a bang

Make for the far corner of the room where the machinery is. (And what looks suspiciously like an early PC in 1943.) Hit the highlighted console, then sit back to enjoy the mayhem.

10. Free as a bird

Things aren't quite over—you need to reach the glider, and, by the looks of things, damn fast—there'll be no running from guards this time; Stahl has ordered the guards to shoot on sight.

Head back out of the German quarters the way you came until you reach the prisoner courtyard. It's crawling with guards, but don't worry. To get past the heavily defended fence, go into barrack A and use the side entrance to circumvent it. Once in the far side of the courtyard, use the sandbags by the water butt as cover, then make a dash for the belltower when the coast is clear. Thanks to your amazing foresight, the grappling hook is already set up, a swift climb will see you reaching the ending sequence—and a rather amusing final twist...

Tally-ho!

in staying alive next month...

TIP-A-SAURUS REX!

Yet another incredibly hefty free book. This time we've torn out the guts of *Turok Evolution* and spread them over 80 pages for you to sink your teeth into.

PLUS!

- Multiplayer tips and strategy guide for *Conflict: Desert Storm*
- *Crazy Taxi 3*, *Splashdown* and *Aggressive Inline* bust wide open
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XGAMER SWEEPS XBOX'S MOST FORBIDDEN NOOKS...

WIN GEAR! SOUND STUFF! PAGE 110

88 ADVENTURES IN CYBERSPACE

The multiplayer gaming arena. Tribes, communities and evil gangs are waiting to either caress, cajole or even cap you. What's it all about? Find out here.

MANUAL OVERRIDE — STUFF THEY DON'T TELL YOU IN THE MANUALS • DARKEST XBOX SECRETS • FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

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88 **ADVENTURES IN CYBERSPACE**
The world is massive—and full of all sorts of weirdos. The pitfalls, and pleasures, of online gaming.

98 **POST APOCALYPSE**
There's nothing quite like a good letter (except a good cuppa).

100 **BURNING QUESTIONS**
Any gaps in your X knowledge? Let us fill them for you.

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XGamer is the best. Oh yes it is. Subscribe and you'll never be without it.

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The *Steel Battalion*'s super joystick, the maddest controller since the fat controller.

108 **GIZZA JOB**
Fancy being a market researcher? Neither did we, too much research.

109 **THE MAKING OF...**
Project Ego gets fatter by the day...

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The best surround sound kit in the world is up for grabs. Marvellous.

112 **NEXT MONTH**
We'll all be older. Scary.

25 PAGES CERTAIN TO SET YOU OFF

ADVENTURES IN CYBERSPACE

Hold on to your D-pads. The Internet is about to revolutionise the Xbox experience. But what can we expect from this brave new world wide web of gaming?

For years now, PC and Mac gamers have been tearing around the Internet like bullies in a playground, hurling abuse at each other, nicking each other's lunch money, and tumbling over the hopscotch lines, locked in fun fights. Meanwhile, us console gamers have been left staring through the railings, only a manky conker to our name, wishing we could join in.

Okay, so you *could* play *Phantasy Star Online* or *Quake 3: Arena* on Sega's Dreamcast, but that was (no) thanks to a slow and clunky dial-up modem. And the games only scraped the surface of what's now possible in the ever-expanding world of online entertainment. The high-speed broadband access provided by Xbox Live will break down such barriers and provide access to the world of massively multiplayer gaming and everything—that's *everything*—from the ever evolving online scene.

As you're about to discover, it's a decidedly different experience to single-player gaming. We'll see virtual worlds where legions of players lead alternate lives. We'll see endless deathmatch arenas and squad-based warfare. We'll see online racing, gaming communities, teams and leagues, maybe even gambling. We'll see *thousands* of people all playing the same game. We might even see a few professional gamers. The possibilities really are extraordinary—turn the page and prepare to be amazed: online gaming is going to transform your life...

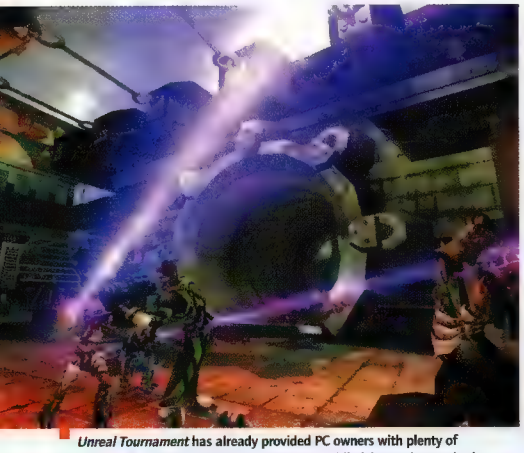
EAT
LEAD
FRITZ

DEATHMATCH GAMING

"In the beginning, there was deathmatch..."

Multiplayer gaming will always be more fun than playing against your Xbox. That's because you get to play, and sometimes even beat, your friends, your colleagues *and* your enemies. Splattering these devious and vocal opponents brings a buzz that foiling an AI-controlled bot can never replicate.

In first-person games, the purest form of multiplayer combat is known as 'deathmatch'. You'll be familiar with this kind of gaming already—four-player *Halo* brings you a typical experience: a bunch of people running around a map, grabbing guns and blasting each other to pieces. It's been around ever since first-person shooters were invented with the release of *Doom* (see box below).



Unreal Tournament has already provided PC owners with plenty of networked bloodletting, organised genocide—and limb-lacerating euphoria.

DEADLY TRUTHS

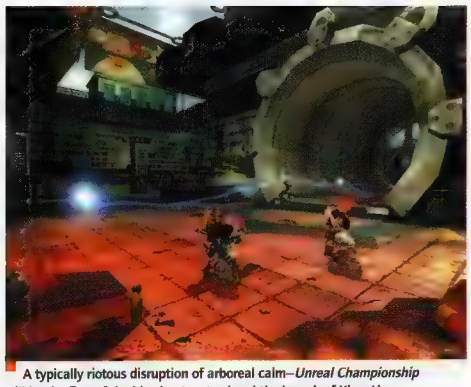
- Deathmatch can be played by many players at once
- It can be dog-fighting
- It's a hard-fought blast-em-up, based on a remote computer

When Xbox Live is activated later this year, it's going to revolutionise deathmatch gaming. You won't just be fighting the guy sitting next to you, and you definitely won't be able to see his screen. You'll be fighting people all across Europe, perhaps even players from Asia, America and beyond. It seems Microsoft has just declared World War 3...

GET READY TO RUMBLE

On the PC, this kind of gaming has been enormously popular for years now, with first-person shooters offering multiple scenarios, guns and new game modes to spice up the action. It's constantly enjoyable and exciting precisely because you're fighting real human beings—inventive, intelligent human beings who really take it personally when you blow them into Pedigree Chum.

The Internet boasts an impressive range of deathmatch games, from the dog-fighting antics of knuckle-cracking flight sims, such as *Crimson Skies*, to the sci-fi moonbase foot-soldier battles of titles like *Unreal Tournament*. There are some big names in PC deathmatch that we can expect to see reincarnated on the Xbox, among them *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, the top WW2 blaster, and *Quake IV*, sequel to the king of multiplayer deathmatches, *Quake 3: Arena*. *Unreal Tournament* should be the first of the big-name shooters to arrive, in the form of the Xbox release *Unreal Championship*.



A typically riotous disruption of arboreal calm—*Unreal Championship* will be the first of the big shooters to signal the launch of Xbox Live.

Thanks to its PC-based innards, the Xbox is going to see many such games in new and improved Xbox-only incarnations, enabling you to log on and play in multiplayer bloodbaths against friends or strangers at the touch of a button.

But these balls-out, free-for-all deathmatches mark only the beginning of our journey. The action really kicks off when multiplayer games pit teams of co-operating players *against one another*. Make no mistake, co-operative gaming is where it's at. This is what made PC titles *Quake* and *Counter-Strike* such huge international hits. They even see teams compete in international leagues and championships for *hard* cash. But more on that later.

QUAKEWORLD

From the hallowed *Halo* to the hollow *Cel Damage*, all deathmatch games owe a debt of gratitude to one game: id Software's seminal *Doom*. It was the popularity of early link-up *Doom* on primitive networks and serial cables that led to the huge, explosive multiplayer games that dominate the Net now.

Yet it was *Doom*'s darker, blood-drenched sequel, *Quake*, that really made Net deathmatch exciting. The tweaked Internet version, *Quakeworld*, improved Net-play enormously. The maps were designed especially for multiplayer combat and new technical achievements meant you could connect up to 16 people at higher speeds than ever before. *Quakeworld* was the potent template for the deathmatch genre and veteran PC gamers still fondly remember the time it first got phonelines buzzing It's unlikely, however, that we'll ever see a game quite as hardcore again. Sensibly, modern game designers are creating titles weighted more towards the beginner and less towards a small and obsessive elite. (For more information on the gory birth of *Quake* gaming, check out www.planetquake.com.)

Caught unawares, POTZW • Eggy feels the heat. The fact you're dealing with a human opponent considerably ups the stakes in *Quakeworld*.

FACT PACKED

The knee-wobbling potential of...

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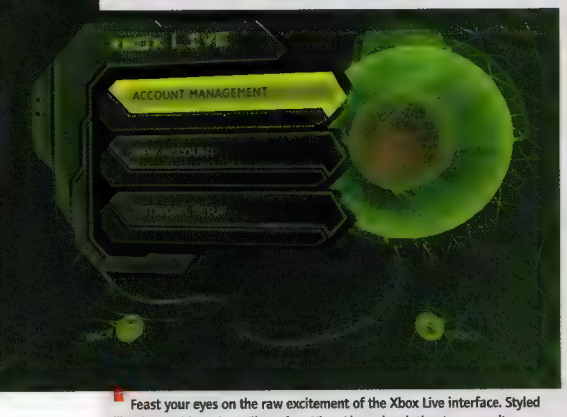
"I want you to guard these giant top secret pencils with your life, do you understand?" *Counter-Strike* makes its multiplayer Xbox debut...

GETTING A SKINFUL

Deathmatch shooters on the PC are able to download add-ons and man-mangling weapons from the Net. The Xbox's hard drive means that it could be the first console ever to take advantage of new and free skins, models and levels for its online games.

XBOX LIVES

Xbox Live is the name of the Xbox only online arena built by Microsoft. Launching this Autumn it's a broadband subscription service that will provide a domain in which you can battle friends and enemies from around the globe. Hook up your Xbox to the Net via the ethernet socket in its rear end and, once you're active on Xbox Live, you'll have a single identity as you battle through games ranging from *Unreal Championship* and *Halo Online* to *Lamborghini* and *Steel Battalion 2*. Every Xbox game will also support the Voice Communicator headset, enabling you to chat with rivals and even mask your ramblings. (For more information, see www.xbox.com/ LIVE.)



Feast your eyes on the raw excitement of the Xbox Live interface. Styled like the Dashboard, you'll need an Xbox Live subscription to access it.

And then there's the almighty *Halo*, whose online multiplayer possibilities have already sent gamers ga-ga with anticipation. Nurse, the dribbling cups...

TEAM GAMES

"Once more unto the game, dear friends..."

To your left is Dave, a self-employed plumber from Belfast. To your right Andro, a student from Amsterdam. Andro's going to lob a grenade into the room in front of you and then you and Dave can charge in, guns blazing. Unfortunately for you, a gang of friends from Nottingham who are squatting in a nearby room have seen this plan a dozen times before. An ambush awaits. Swearing, explosions and endless hilarity ensue, not to mention damage to a few egos.

Competition against organised teams is the ultimate online gaming experience. Let's face it, games can be a lonely pursuit—unless you're playing alongside half a dozen other people... Then it becomes much more fun, especially when these people are trying to help you out and not just stabbing you in the virtual innards with a lightsaber.

Team games come in many forms, but recently two popular types have sprung up. One is based on the old 'Capture The Flag' idea. In CTF you have a flag in your base and must defend it against the enemy team. They'll have a flag, too, which you have to capture. Whoever steals the most flags and returns them to their base, wins. CTF has spawned dozens of variations, such as single-flag CTF (where there's just one flag in the middle) to three-team CTF (where the maps are triangular and your team faces two other opposing flag-stealing teams).

TEAM STALK

Then there are the objective-based games, in which one team might be trying to rescue hostages, plant a bomb or blow up a facility. The other team then attempts to foil them. PC games such as *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *Counter-Strike* are objective-based, squad-combat games and have proved enormously popular with players across the Net.

And once people started playing team deathmatch games, class-based gaming was born. Games such as *Team Fortress* set you in CTF type scenarios, but instead of everyone being equal in their abilities, as they are in a straight deathmatch, you can take on a more characterful role. You might want to be a sneaky spy, a turret-building engineer, or a tough-but-slow heavy weapons dude. Classes expand the possibilities for tactics in team play and enable players to specialise more in what they enjoy doing, thus enhancing the experience. Are you a sneaky type? Or a frontline killer with an addiction to rocket fumes? Games like *Team Fortress* and *Wolfenstein* enable you to play the part that suits you.

TEAM TALK

- [illegible]
- They also demand [illegible]
- [illegible]

COUNTER-STRIKE

The game that changed Net gaming forever actually came about as a modification of blockbusting shooter *Half-Life*. Amateur coders adapted *Half-Life's* multiplayer mode into one that pitted terrorists against Special Forces in objective-based maps. The modification turned *Counter-Strike* into the most popular team-based shooter, thanks to its simplicity, fun gameplay and fantastic machine guns. Be warned, though, it's brutal. Once you're shot dead, you're out for good. Fortunately, rounds only last a couple of minutes and you can watch the rest of the game via the tense spectator mode.

Cash rewards for successful kills and completed objectives can be reinvested in new and more powerful weapons that define your role. Do you play the cautious sniper or the leather-faced, assault trooper? Whatever happens, you'll be needing the comfort of a Kevlar jacket; chucking flash-bangs about like it's Guy Fawkes night and trying to avoid ripping bullets through friendly skulls. With all that going for it, *Counter-Strike* is destined to rule on Xbox—although not until next year. For now, turn to www.counter-strike.net.

Rising from the code-tweaked corpse of the formidable *Half-Life*, *Counter-Strike* promises to bring multiplayer frag-'em-up ferocity to your Xbox.

THE MATRIX

As the sequel to *The Matrix* prepares for its 2003 release, there are several online games planned where you and friends will be able to fight your way into the Matrix as virtual adventurers. Is it just us, or does anyone else see the irony here?

THE VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

"Who needs friends when you've got a rocket launcher?"

It's not just the games which make online gaming so exhilarating; the players themselves are equally important. A real sense of community spirit can spring up as players share in both the joys and agonies of victory and defeat. Gaming teams chat on instant messaging channels, talk about their gaming tactics and exchange ideas on Internet forums or at gaming events, such as local gaming tournaments run by large gaming associations (check out www.vga.org.uk or www.multiplayer.co.uk).

Because it's all people-based, online gaming can get pretty personal, too. There have been events where a member of a gaming community has died and memorial games have been held. Or, more happily, celebratory shindigs when folk have met–and subsequently married– after in-game encounters. This happened most famously in *Ultima Online*: the betrothed dressed as their characters for the real-life marriage and then had an in-game wedding attended by all the online players who couldn't make the real-life event. It's a new and, erm, interesting form of culture.

CLAN WARFARE

- Clans are what people call 'teams' online
- Clan tournaments are big business
- Getting involved in the community is entirely optional

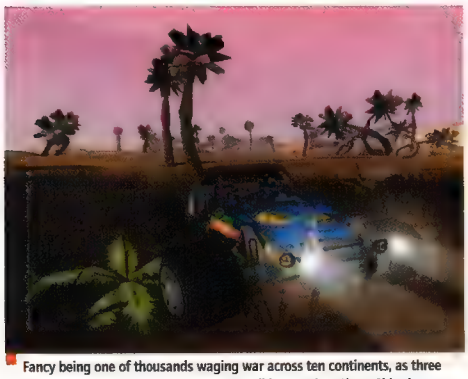
them where the enemy sniper is hiding adds a whole new dimension to online play. They could almost be sitting right next to you.

In PC gaming, teams are known as 'clans', and have existed for years now. They're loose organisations, small squads of players, who've joined together to play a particular game. Anyone can set one up. All you need is a name and some players. Just as with playing football or any real-world sport, clan players get used to the playing styles of their team-mates. Gaming as a squad means you can try unusual plans or tactics to defeat the opposing teams; such play can be enormously rewarding and really adds to the competitive spirit. Top clans seem almost supernatural in their abilities, thanks to hours of practice, immaculate timing–and a total lack of any real social life whatsoever.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Of course, most of this socialising has been done on the PC or Mac with a keyboard–and typing isn't everyone's cup of char. This isn't a problem for Xbox. The keyboard doesn't look like making much of an appearance any time soon, so we're left with two main methods of communication: using hotkey speech menus to say a few predetermined phrases and a few in-game taunts. Or real-time voice communication.

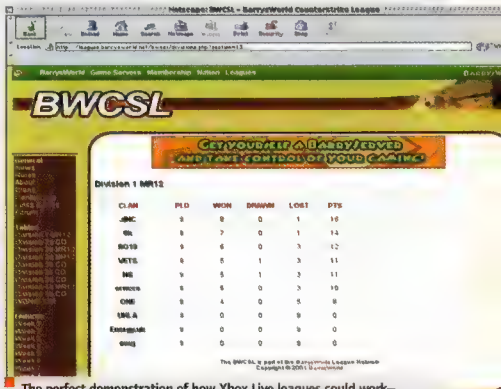
Real-time chinwagging is definitely the way forward. It discourages idiots from cussing you online, but also helps you to get to know your team-mates a whole lot better, because you can chat to them directly on your gaming headset. Being able to shout and tell



Fancy being one of thousands waging war across ten continents, as three factions struggle for global supremacy? You'll be wanting *PlanetSide*, then.

LEAGUES AND LADDERS

If a game has an online component, you can be sure there'll be some level of competition organised to satisfy its players. Which means Xbox Live will encourage a slew of online leagues and ladders. League fixtures are pretty common for team games, where all the teams in the league play each other on set dates to climb league positions. A ladder works slightly differently and is ideal for games where you play individually. It works by placing you in the middle of a list, with the first entrant going in at the top. As games are played, the list starts to rank itself: if you lose a game, you go down a place; if you win, you go up. Consistent winners are then soon battling for the top spot. Once such leagues are up and running, there could well be prizes to win and glory to garner as Xbox gamers battle it out. (For a look at how these things are run, check out online gaming site 'BarrysWorld' at www.barrysworld.com.)



The perfect demonstration of how Xbox Live leagues could work– BarrysWorld provides a genial introduction to leagues, lists and more.

CHEAT, C'EST CHIC

Some people think it's cool to cheat and, given the Xbox's PC architecture, clever hackers will no doubt find a way into the system. It's tough, but you can always fiddle with stuff at the user-end of the game. Fortunately, Microsoft is sparing no expense to put a stop to cheating scum.

In *Phantasy Star Online*, players will be able to imbue their characters with *real* personality–and react accordingly when mauled by passing horrors...

ROLE-PLAYING

"Pretending to be an Elf has never been so much fun..."

In terms of making cash, online role-playing gaming has been the major success story to date. Games such as *Everquest, Ultima* and *Anarchy Online,* create huge worlds, with players paying a monthly subscription for access. If you're an RPG-player, you won't just be buying the game and spending a few hours completing it; you'll be *investing* in it. Online RPGs can't realistically be completed, because there are always exciting new quests to follow and interesting new characters to play with. It's enormously addictive. Players soon find themselves absorbed in adventures, discovering treasure, equipping their characters and meeting up with other eager gamers to go on epic quests. Massively multiplayer RPGs like this are coming to Xbox and first time adventurers will find it unlike anything they've played before.

WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE TODAY?

Online RPGs are typically set in huge worlds that hundreds or even thousands of people can access simultaneously. As with all RPGs, you first create a character—a wizard, perhaps, or a burly warrior—then travel out into the world, solving quests and missions. Success brings your character wealth and experience. You'll probably slay endless leagues of monsters, too, progressing to the harder beasts as your character evolves. Of course, other people in this virtual world are vying for glory just like you: team up with them to solve complex missions, or battle them for their spoils or just the hell of seeing who's the toughest. In case weak-muscled initiates are turning pale at the thought, these games always feature safe areas where new players are protected from attacks by monsters or high-level players and are given the chance to toughen up.

Some games, however, positively encourage war between their players. *Anarchy Online*, for example, is a sci-fi RPG based on a weird frontier planet. In addition to your regular quests and monster battling, there's the added spice of a planetary war going on between the corporations and the rebels. At the start of the game, you have to choose sides and, at some point, you *will* come into conflict with the enemy. Another game which popularises this kind of action, *Dark Age Of Camelot*, has also proved hugely successful. The heart of *DAOC* is based around capturing forts from the enemy—all actions that involve armies of players and their siege machines.

Mind you, not all RPGs support so many players. *Neverwinter Nights*, for example, enables you to play through single-player quests with your friends. Rather like *Halo* co-op, except more beardy.

ROLE CALL

- In RPGs, hundreds of people play together
- Bear in mind that you might have to pay a monthly subscription
- Incredibly addictive as one a complete world can be

PROJECT ENTROPIA

Another online giant set to make a ruckus on Xbox is MindArk's colossal *Project Entropia*. It's another enormous multiplayer venture, but with a difference: you can turn cash into in-game currency—and back again. Make dosh during play and you could be rich in real life.

Giant land masses and sprawling spidery-limbed vessels await the inhabitants of *Project Entropia*. Already a hit with PC gamers, it's now all set to go Xbox.

Ultima Online saw gaming's first civil unrest when players organised a protest against technical issues by massing outside Lord British's castle.

STAR WARS: GALAXIES

Star Wars: Galaxies is, without a doubt, the most exciting of the Internet-only RPGs, enabling Xbox players to mix with players using PCs and other consoles to explore a recreation of the _Star Wars_ universe. It's going to be classic _Star Wars_, too, so none of that dodgy _Episode I_ stuff. Characters such as Han Solo and Luke Skywalker could make an appearance, potentially controlled by the people from Verant, the company behind the game. You'll be able to play as almost any _Star Wars_ race you like, so being a Wookie Jedi is definitely on the cards. Becoming a Jedi won't be too straightforward, of course, because otherwise we'd _all_ be one—and that just wouldn't be any fun. Verant isn't letting on how this will work just yet, but there's no doubt that we're in for a jaw-dropping experience. It's already looking beautiful (see XGamer 06). For more information, have a gander at starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com.

The kind of game thirtysomethings could only dream of as kids, *Galaxies* is a working *Star Wars* universe where you can fulfil your destiny. Online, that is.

Gorgeously realised interactive worlds ensure your *Galaxies* hero has more to do than just pootle about counting pretty pixels.

PERSISTENT WORLDS

"A virtual galaxy of new worlds to explore."

The coolest aspect of these massive multiplayer games is the idea of a 'persistent world'. All the big RPGs have them: a self-contained and coherent 'universe' that players can quit from and come back to at any time. Even if you're away for days or weeks, that world continues to change and grow, run independently by the game's creators. Unlike a single-player game, the areas you explore will be constantly changing and developed by scores of other players. This has encouraged the development of completely new game types—and not just RPGs either. Imagine exploring the *Star Trek* universe in your own ship, as part of a fleet comprising your friends, for instance. Or battling and sneaking your way through the streets of some *Blade Runner*-style city, populated by like-minded gamers from across the world. All these things are being made possible, and look set to revolutionise the way we enjoy our Xbox games.

EARTH & BEYOND

Older gamers will fondly remember how much fun it was to explore space in David Braben's *Elite*. That's going to be emulated by EA's *Earth & Beyond*, an online universe that will see hundreds of players exploring trading and fighting among the stars.

REMEMBER ME?

In persistent worlds, your actions have a lasting effect on the environment—events simply don't 'freeze' when you turn off your console. People keep adventuring and remember you. Fool around in one session, for example, and you might just find you've made enemies in the next. Similarly, you can build on established virtual friendships to solve particularly tough tasks *collectively*... In *Dark Age Of Camelot*, for example, whole teams can band together to besiege or defend castles—this requires different skills and the concerted efforts of many to reap the rewards. Or perhaps you'll play a strategy game where your space empire looks after itself while you're away, your CPU generals texting or emailing you when all is not well, so you can dive back in to remedy the situation.

Persistent worlds prove particularly addictive because playing in them can be like leading a second life. You can even trade on E-Bay to auction for in-game items that make life easier in the persistent world. Meet the sellers in-game to trade items and then pay them real-world money through E-Bay.

UNREAL WORLD

- Online games stay running even when you leave them
- Entire worlds, populated by other players, exist online
- *Halo 2* could boast just such a persistent world

HUNDRED-MAN HALO

Okay, picture this: a game called *PlanetSide*, coming out on PC, and potentially on Xbox. A war on a distant future planet. You're armed with hi-tech armour and weaponry. Sounds a bit *Halo*? Well, yes, except that *PlanetSide* features a persistent world which can support *thousands* of players. Your character always stays in the game, but if you die you respawn at a distant outpost and have to find your way back to the action, perhaps losing kit and a few experience points en route. Cast into enormous war zones, hundreds of people must battle for supremacy over hi-tech facilities, sometimes forced to confront a batch of super-tanks dropped in by the game creators to add a little spice to the mêlée. You'll be able to keep the same character and even have your own virtual apartment and permanent arsenal. You can also choose to join a guild, performing tasks that enable other guild members to help you earn money or obtain new skills.

Remember, though, that when you come back to the game, the war may have moved on as a result of the other players' actions. But then this is a living breathing world which you can influence, too—and other players can interact with you on a level that single-player games simply cannot compete with. There's every reason to suspect that *PlanetSide*, or perhaps *Halo 2*, will do something like this on the Xbox very soon.

If sci-fi shoot-'em-ups aren't your thing, then perhaps the PC-based *World War II Online* will fill the breech. Want to trudge across Belgium in real time or get caught in a Nazi blitzkrieg? Well, you'll soon be able to. There's not just first-person shooters to savour, either. *Sovereign*, an RTS from the creators of *Star Wars: Galaxies* and *PlanetSide*, will see you engaged in tactical warfare on huge fronts in games that cast hundreds of players as virtual commanders in a single epic persistent battle. You'll be able to drive a tank in a division piloted by folk from all across Europe. Similar releases, such as the obscure *Time Of Defiance*, will enable participants to play in a game that lasts just a month—during which time you have to create a huge galactic empire and outsmart rival powermongers from across Europe.

Impressive, isn't it? But game developers are only just starting to scratch the surface of what's possible with the persistent world concept.

SPORTS

"If it's in the game, it's on the Net."

Sports online might get neglected when we're blinded by the bright lights of *Star Wars* and *Unreal Championship*, but rumours are rife that the next generation of footie games will soon be clamouring for the Internet crown.

Sports games have never been big news on PC but Microsoft appreciates how important they are to console players. So far Billy's bootboys have concentrated their efforts on sorting out American football games for our trans-atlantic cousins but they know they need a proper football game if Xbox Live is to succeed in Europe. The potential for online tournaments is obviously huge although the current Internet sports scene offers a sketchy guide at best to the way we can expect things to go.

BE A GOOD SPORT

A few years ago, an amateur coding team took the bold step of turning *Quake* into a racing game. The result was as crude as it was entertaining but it effectively made multiplayer Internet racing a reality. Since then, efforts have moved on at speed, powered in no small measure by huge wads of publisher cash. Some PC racing efforts, such as *Shotoku* (*Tokyo Extreme Racer*), are straightforward conversions of single-player racing, while others, like EA's *Motor City Online*, embrace the ideas of persistent world gaming. In *Motor City*, you can hang out in virtual bars and compete in street races, buying new parts for your hotrod, managing your cash and running your own garage. The cars and the rest of the racing scene remain whether you switch off or not, and every race is against a real person. *Motor City* has had its fair share of problems, but it shows what can be done if the numbers and concept are right.

Xbox Live should take things a stage further and is well stacked with racing games. Highly anticipated titles such as *Sega GT 2002*, *Lamborghini*, and the sequels to *Project Gotham Racing* and *Rallisport Challenge* are all scheduled to go online.

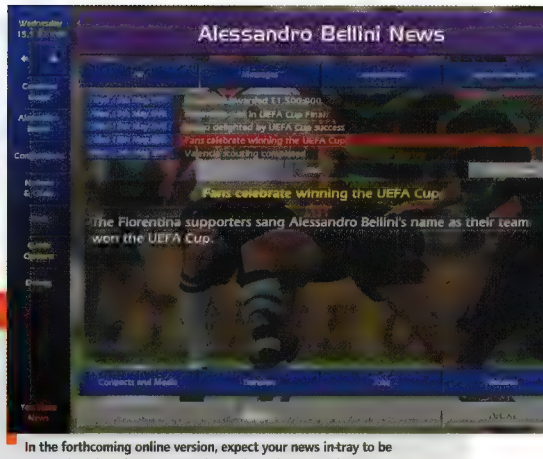
Of course, if it's the management and statistics you're after, then there's nothing better than the classic *Championship Manager* (details of which you'll find on this very page). *Champ Man 4* has been confirmed as an online title and is poised to lure even more punters to the Internet banner.

SPORT UNITED

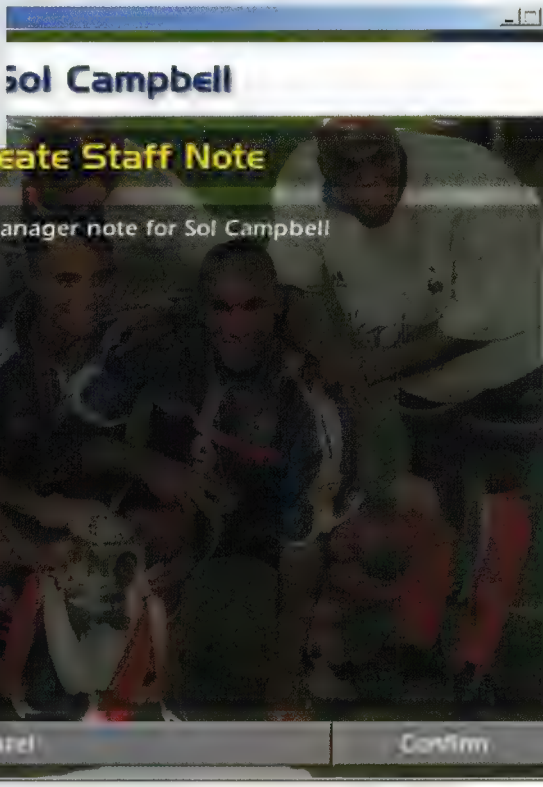
- You'll be able to play footie in leagues online
- You'll be able to play against others
- Championship Manager is going online

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER ONLINE

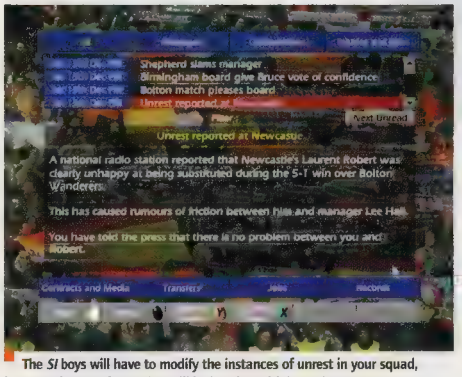
So far, football management games have failed to take off online, but the next version of *Championship Manager*, the daddy of them all, boasts full Internet support. *Champ Man* will be free, asking you to pay only for extra services and luxuries, such as large numbers of transfers or particular match analysis tools. Football fanatics will take to this like Maradona to a dubious goal opportunity, especially when leagues become competitive and people can out-play their mates with their fave teams. (For more info, see www.sigames.com.)



In the forthcoming online version, expect your news in-tray to be rammed with offers for your star players from rival, real-life managers.



Keeping an extensive collection of notes on top players will be crucial. If you see someone hit the market at a bargain price, you'll be able to bid immediately.



The *SI* boys will have to modify the instances of unrest in your squad, because the transfer market will be buzzing with bartering managers.

The new version of the game will not only feature more human opponents, but even more statistics reflecting your players' abilities and performances.

BEING A TRUE PRO

Professional gamers are a reality. Well, kind of. The problem for gamers now is that the interest has shifted from one-on-one combat to team play, making the winnings less substantial for individual players. A few years ago, it looked as if top gamers—Britain's Sujoy or the US-based Fatal1ty, to name but two—might be able to live off their earnings. But now that there are more players fighting for the sponsorship, the scene is tougher. Pro-gamers are forced to get hold of other jobs. The first and most famous gamer, Thresh, now runs www.firingsquad.com, for example. Nevertheless, a growing number of elite gamers are fighting for cash and glory, especially in the Cyber-Athlete leagues. Check out their website for news about the biggest tournaments (www.thecpl.com).

MORE TO COME

This is just a taster to give you an idea of the potential of Xbox Live, but there's much more to discover about online gaming. We'll keep you updated as the Xbox Net scene develops including a special report on the best way to get connected in XGamer 10.

GOING PRO

"Why don't you get yourself a proper job?"

An increasing amount of money is at stake in multiplayer gaming. And we're not just talking about the people who make the games—we're talking about the players themselves. Current online rewards tend to be little more than a few prizes or games vouchers, but they're increasing in number and value. In the larger tournaments— the Insomnia gaming tournaments or the Battletop World Games championship, for instance—there's real cash to be won. And just like in real-world sport, sponsors are putting up genuine prize money to attract the best players to their tournaments.

Jay Wilbur is the man behind Epic, the company responsible for *Unreal Championship* and its PC partner *Unreal Tournament 2003*. Talking recently to **XGamer** about the *Unreal* games, he argued that the only way gaming is going to make real money is when TV gets involved with games coverage. He's right, of course—and it's already starting to happen...

In Korea, the events are being widely hailed as the latest media phenomenon, with crowds packing Internet cafés up and down the country to enjoy the bigger showdowns. But already in Europe and America, thanks to special servers, hundreds if not thousands of people can log onto the hugely popular *Quake* and *Counter-Strike* titles to spectate multiplayer events. The cooler games look, the more likely it is that such events will become high-profile—indeed, a great strength of the *Unreal* series is that the game is slick enough to look brilliant on well-edited TV.

With the big PC tournaments offering prize money for gamers and visibility for their sponsors (see box, above). It's surely only a matter of time before console gaming becomes big business too (a $100,000 jackpot is not unusual for some PC tournaments). Once Xbox Live takes off, leading gamers will emerge through the ranking systems and we Microsoft and the other major publishers will no doubt want to make a big deal out of their game heroes.

As gaming shifts online, it's only a matter of time before anyone with a gamepad will have a chance of making some money...

PRO FILE

- The popularity of the online scene has spawned sub-gamers
- Big money is on tournament gaming
- One day you could be making cash from gamers. Probably

XGAMER

Contact magazine > Want to know more about online gaming or the potential for Xbox Live? Then mail us those questions quick.

Post it! > **XGamer** Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW

Email it! > xgamer@futurenet.co.uk

POST APOCALYPSE

Where your pens explode with fury and joy.

First past the post > Al Bickham

ALPHA MAIL– YOU'RE TOP OF THE TREE...

The write stuff. Our letter of the month receives a year's subscription to XGamer and a top Xbox game.

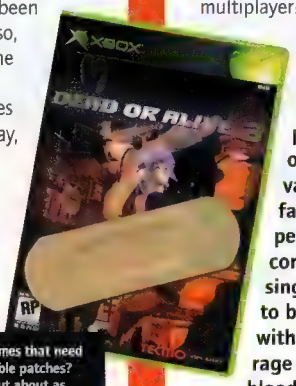
"A BAD PATCH?"

FROM > *James Wills, email*

I have mixed thoughts about the idea of expansion disks and downloadable extras for things like costumes and weaponry.

First off, it could encourage developers to rush out games, then later create expansions containing features that should've been in the original in the first place. Also, they may have to be installed on the hard drive, thus forcing you to buy memory cards to fit your game saves on. The PC started out the same way, and now PC gamers have to download patches to fix bugs that shouldn't have been there.

Even if the disks or downloads themselves are free, they create more hassle for gamers.



Xbox games that need downloadable patches? Criminal. But about as likely as a snake with feet.

We understand your concerns, but we don't reckon Xbox will go the way of the PC.

Here's why. Console manufacturers hold in-depth QA sessions for every game written for their machine. If it isn't up to scratch, it's turned back to the developers for further work. Therefore, the likelihood of a console game requiring a patch after release to make it work properly is negligible. Besides, if we reviewed a game that required a patch, we'd take it to the cleaners.

As for your hard drive filling up with data, you've got eight Gigabytes to play with. If there are optional downloads, they'll take up a fraction of space. In short, we're optimistic about what will happen.

"ONE IS NEVER ENOUGH"

FROM > *Rick, email*

Thank you for the very informative Xbox Live report in **XGamer 06**. It all sounds so much fun and, being fortunate enough to have an ADSL connection, I can't wait for Xbox Live to launch here in the UK.

But I was wondering: being avid gamers like myself, do you ever feel that multiplayer games somewhat overshadow single-player games? Have you ever played a MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing game), then tackled a solo RPG, and felt that everything seemed a little fake? Take *Halo*. Could you imagine what it would be like with no multiplayer? And have you ever noticed how much more fun racing games are when you're racing against real people?

Good point. I'm an avid MMORPG player meself, Rick–I play *EverQuest* on my PC–but even though I love the variety, the scope and scale, and the fact that there are thousands of other people online with whom to communicate/ally/fight, I still enjoy single-player games. Why? Because I like to be told a story, a story I can interact with. I like AI to challenge me. I like to rage against the machine, get my nose bloodied–and hopefully win.

You're right to suggest that single-player games offer a completely different experience to multiplayer games. They do. But saying that one is better than the other is like saying, I dunno, tea is better than coffee. Both have something different going for them, and, therefore, you'll prefer one to the other according to your tastes. Personally, I like 'em both, and which one I'll take depends on my mood. In short, I love my MMORPGs. but that won't stop me enjoying *Baldur's Gate*.

"REVIEWS BLUES"

FROM > *Tony, Fareham*

First, one thing that's got to be said: **XGamer** has to be the best Xbox mag going. Now for the complaint.

I was very disappointed to see your poor review of *NBA Live 2002* in **XGamer 01**. You said not even NBA fans would like this game. Well, I'm a big NBA fan, and while the graphics aren't near what the Xbox is capable of, they're still pretty good. Plus, the seasons can be adjusted to suit your mood and the friendlies are always fun with a mate. To be honest, it *isn't* the best game going–*Halo* still holds that honour–but 2/10? Come on, that's just plain mean.

It's an issue that's guaranteed to raise its head once in a while. When it comes to review scores, all we can do is guide you in the right direction, based on our extensive combined knowledge of games past and present. So treat a review as an in-depth buyer's guide. If we don't think a game's worth shelling £45 out on, then we'll say so, and

A treat for the party? MMORPGs may be growing in popularity, but they'll never replace the single-player game...

we won't pull our punches.

But however well informed a review may be, it's still based upon opinion. Look at *Max Payne*. Where many see a classy action game that does things in a new and clever way, others see a one-trick pony. And a blind one at that. What we're getting at is that you have to make your mind up for yourself, and if that means going into a games shop and trying before you buy, then so be it.

We gave *NBA 2002* a 2/10 because we thought it was rubbish, and we stand by that. But please don't let that mar your enjoyment, Tony. If you're getting something out of the game, then that's great. If we all agreed on everything, the world would be a terribly dull place.

"EGO TRIP"

FROM > *Thomas Bottrill, North Devon*

I thoroughly enjoy the 'Making Of *Project Ego*' in **XGamer**. It's interesting to see what the guys at Big Blue Box think of the whole development and marketing process involved with creating games. Their sense of

Molyneux: Omni-talented Peter may be an über developer, but *Ego* is really Big Blue Box's baby.

humour also shines through—it's a bloody good laugh. What gets me, though, is that everyone seems to credit *Project Ego* to Peter Molyneux. He's there as support only, isn't he? It's really the creativity of Dene and Simon Carter that brought *Project Ego* into being.

Nail, head *thud*! Bang on, Thomas. However, Big Blue Box is technically and financially supported by Lionhead, Peter Molyneux's dev-house. As far as *Project Ego* is concerned, he's simply on hand in a consultancy role. But, yes, the real foot-slogging is down to Simon and Dene—just as it was with *Dungeon Keeper* on the PC.

But, let's face it, Peter Molyneux's a big name in the games industry. If you were developing a ground-breaking RPG, you'd want his name involved, wouldn't you? Think of the kudos. And the luvverly hype.

"CHEAP THRILLS"

FROM > *Bhavesh, email*

I was asking my Xbox-owning mates which mag they buy. All of them said *XBM* or *OXM*. I then asked them why they didn't buy **XGamer** and they replied by saying it looks cheap and nasty. I had to agree—you need to make your mag stand out from the crowd and not look so cheap, like it's not worth the money. In my opinion, you should get your act together or no-one will buy your mag. Because, at the end of the day, your mag's reviews, features, etc, are the best. It's just that the magazine lacks oomph.

We appreciate the criticism, mate. The fact is, a magazine appeals to different people on different levels—visual and editorial style, content, how ahead of the game (no pun intended) it is... You can see these elements for yourself just by flicking through a mag in WHSmith. If you measure it all up and **XGamer**'s not your bag, then it's not your bag.

But it's really our design you're criticising, so let's focus on that. Basically, we try to represent things in as visually exciting a way as possible, because we all interact with games on a visual level, hence the enormous blown-up screenshots. Xbox graphics are brilliant and we want to celebrate that fact. We then pack each page with info-delivery devices, such as info-boxes, captions, flashes, extra headings, and so on, because we want each page to really vibrate with oodles of digestible games-related data, and to highlight different facets of the title under inspection. If our pages were solid blocks of text with only a couple of screenshots, the mag would be less effective—and dull.

But all criticism is good, because it

side lines

I spot a Covenant Elite, moving close to the bottom.
> *Ed Smith, email*

Mine even survived a full-on attack by the dog.
> *David O'Reilly, email*

Ah, the indestructible Xbox controller. Also available with cement trim.

Where the hell did you get screenshots of *Halo 2*?!
> *Jamie Clapham, email*

No one's seen any *Halo 2* shots yet. So far we've illustrated our stories with rare pics of features that didn't make it into the original game. Why? Because there's every chance Bungie will rework these ideas into the sequel. We should have the world's first *Halo 2* images direct from Bungie next issue.

How about the XB emulation on page 127 of **XGamer 06**?
> *Metin.aksoy1, text*

If there was one we could tell you about it. But there wasn't.

I'd like to test my ranking on the vast mass of players.
> *Chris Roberts, Canada*

It's a good job you're not Jonathan Woss.

Don't people realise there's enough waste in the world without creating more?
> *Lee Walmsley, email*

I think something different should come more often.
> *Bhavesh Mistry (again), Bradford*

Look, it's all getting a bit fruity. Keep it clean, people.

I split his hairline with an almighty swipe!
> *Rob Vincent, email*

Hair today, gone tomorrow. Feel free to punch us for that.

The guests were all clustered together, so I sprayed the area with sticky bombs.
> *Niall Randall, email*

Okay, you've had fair warning. Get OUT!

WRITE ON

Being the manly kind of souls our readers are, we love getting feedback from you lot, so keep it coming in. Make us feel wanted.

XGAMER

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Mistakes? Us? Never...

Even though we're clearly geniuses, occasionally, we write stuff that's full of bull puckey. Be our watchdogs, and sniff it out...

In your bit about *Broken Sword*, you said, "And for the first time you could end up dead." You could die in the first two as well.
NICKED! > *Paul Astill, Nottingham*

In your Greatest *Halo* Moments feature, you said, "I pull a loop the loop in my Banshee." You can't do that in a Banshee.
EXPOSED! > *D. Stillman, email*

XGamer 06, p25, *True Crime*: "Taking Honk Kong movies as its inspiration..." *Honk* Kong? I'm confused!
EEJITS! > *Chris Matthews, email*

XGamer 06, p31: You said, "*MSG* creators." Surely, you mean '*MGS*', for *Metal Gear Solid*? Twits!
GUILTY! > *Blair Melville, Scotland*

Lock, stock and barrel, Blair. Seems we accidentally used the abbreviation for monosodium glutamate, mate. Have a game on us.

makes us examine the way we do things and helps us improve the mag. So cheers for your comments. Can't believe you said we look *cheap*, though. Jeez...

"CIVIL WAR!"

FROM > *Ped, email*

Hey! Just bought an Xbox and borrowed the March issue of **XGamer** off a mate. (Oi! Buy yer own—Ed.) I read the article on *Halo* online—as I already have a PC, a hub, an Xbox and broadband—and I was pretty stoked. Using Gamespy to play online, however, I had massive trouble joining other peoples' games, and getting others to join in mine. Recently, though, I discovered an alternative site: www.xbconnect.com. It's more reliable, easier to use, and a lot quicker than Gamespy. On 512k broadband, we've managed to get six and seven-player games running smoothly. The only drawback is that not many English gamers seem to know about it.

Warning! But be careful. This information will ruin social lives, relationships and hopefully start a nationwide war—three vs three CTF on Blood Gulch, without the ball-ache of having to move your Xbox to a mate's house. It's gripped. Where's my Warthog? Let's off-road.

Yeah, we've heard that there are some speed issues with the Gamespy service. The fact is, playing over the Internet with your Xbox at present isn't perfect, as it's not designed to work this way, using your PC as a 'middle-man', so to speak. Rest assured, when Xbox Live comes into being, it'll run as smooth as a freshly-shaved chimp. We're intrigued by your suggestion of using xbconnect.com, though. We'll be trying it out soon. As for nationwide war, the XGamer all-stars *Halo* team is content to issue an early challenge: when we're all online, fancy trying to kick our asses? We'll give you details of how to fight us closer to the time.

"Geddim... no... look out, he's got a missi... GAAK! Gerroff, ya monkey..." XGamer goes *Halo* nuts.

BURNING QUESTIONS

The choking smoke of confusion doused by **XGamer's** extinguisher of truth.

I'd like to know if the Yamaha TSS-1 5.1 surround-sound speaker system will work on the Xbox. I've seen it on Amazon for £150—would this be any better than the ones you've shown in your mag?

FROM > *Craig Thomson, email*

First off, yes. The TSS-1 5.1 has an optical-in socket, so you'll be able to pipe digital loveliness through it directly from your Xbox. Second, we've not yet heard the system for ourselves, so we couldn't give you a comparison. However, online reviews suggest that it's a quality system. Check out zdnet.com, where it scored 7.8 out of 10. Take note, though—they recommend it for DVD movies rather than games.

Does the Corega five-port ultra-slim desk mount hub work with Xbox? If it doesn't, what's the next cheapest ethernet hub, and where can I buy it?

FROM > *Jonathan Kirkham, email*

Well, after a little investigation Jonathan, frankly, we think you've already found what looks like the bargain of the century there. It's going for mere £16.44 at Microwarehouse (http://store.europe.yahoo.com/microwarehouse/e404985.html or call 08705 168671 for more details). They've also confirmed to us that it is indeed Xbox compatible. As far as ethernet hubs go, that's by far the cheapest we've seen. Good work.

Can you have more than one Xbox communicator connected to the machine at the same time?

FROM > *Stephen Deacon, Runcorn*

Yep. The communicator connects to the joypad, so you could have up to four jacked in at once. However, the software will denote whether you can actually use all those at once, so it really depends on the game you're using. But it is *technically* possible.

When I buy the headset and the disc to play on Xbox Live, what will I have to pay after my 12-month subscription runs out?

FROM > *Rick, email*

Bizarrely, Rick, nobody knows yet. Microsoft has made no official announcements and even our moles can't seem to get hold of juicy nuggets of info. However, judging by other online game services (*EverQuest* or *Laser Squad Nemesis*, for example), we're expecting it to be somewhere in the region of £5-£10 per month. Of course, it all depends on demand, popularity and so forth. We also expect that, like other services, you'll be able to buy different subscription packages—say, three-month, six-month or 12-month—with discounts for longer-term packages. So there's our educated guess. You'll know the truth as soon as we do.

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Distributed through the UK Newstrade by
Seymour Distribution, 86 Newman Street, London, W1P 3LD.
Tel. 020 7907 6000

Printed in the UK by Southern Print, Poole, Dorset
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about xgamer

XGamer is a publication of FXM International a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Future Network. XGamer is currently published in the United Kingdom. If you're interested in becoming a licensee, please contact Claire Morgan, International Business Manager on +44 (0) 1225 442244 or claire.morgan@fxmi.co.uk

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Official UK Xbox Magazine is The Future Network's official Xbox magazine. Published two weeks after each edition of XGamer, it's the perfect companion to this fine mag

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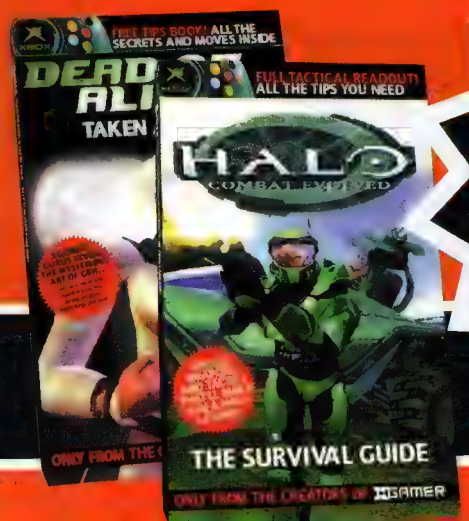

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HAVE A DEEKS AT PAGE 112 FOR ADVANCE WARNING ON THE FUTURE OF XGAMER

STEEL BATTALION

There's been a few mech games in the past, but from the look of *Steel Battalion*, all will perish when this big swine hits the battlefield (notwithstanding *Mech Assault*–page 026). Using that massive joystick with more buttons than an old lady's knitting basket (page 106), you'll be able to jump into the cockpit of 20 different mechs and become part of a hard-as-nails task force. Your mission? To overthrow a fiendish government on a Pacific island and turn everything into dust. Looks ace.

"I wanna be a fooking killa robot!" *Steel Battalion* producer Atsushi Inaba listens attentively to Curley's colourful entreaty...

MECHING IT HAPPEN

MEGA JOYSTICK!

Atsushi Inaba, Producer of Capcom's *Steel Battalion*, reveals huge robots and even bigger joysticks. We're agog.

Looming over us like a humongous battle 'bot barging in for the kill, mech game *Steel Battalion* is possibly the most exciting project since Mr Armstrong went moon-walking. It also features Vertical Tanks [VTs] and makes exciting use of a customised joystick that looks like it's been built for an octopus. XGamer wrestled Atsushi to the floor to find out more...

XG: *Steel Battalion* is one of the most ambitious Xbox titles we've yet seen. What inspired you?
AI: I remember playing a flight sim game, starting up the engine by pressing the release buttons one by one. I felt a great excitement just from pushing the buttons. With the joystick, the goal was to combine essential and fun functions—I wanted lots of switches so people could enjoy watching others play. The fun part would have to be the switches that are only used to start up the various systems in the VT. They're useless for everything else, but we thought it would be interesting for the game.

XG: The controller, cockpit and graphical details—such as the visual distortion and shaking—really emphasise the fact that you're sitting in a VT in the midst of a mech fight. Tell us more...
AI: You really notice the dirt, sand and dust in the air in this game. It gives you a sense of fighting in a harsh climate. An important point is that the screen needs to be narrow and small. You might think it would've been cooler to have had a bigger screen, but we wanted it to remain small, just as our designers had imagined it.

XG: Will you always battle the enemies alone? Is there room for teamwork with AI allies?
AI: In many missions, it's possible to collaborate with AI allies. You can fight as a member of a squad—and if you make it to squad leader, you can give orders to your allies. These include 'Destroy', 'Search the target', 'Cover' and 'Let the damaged ally evacuate the area'.

XG: Is everything you see destructible? Tell us about the biggest object you can destroy.
AI: You can destroy most, but not all objects. You can also burn down any forest environments with the flame-thrower. The biggest thing you can destroy is the Executive Office of the President. You can also blow up airborne enemies, including helicopters.

XG: What are the missions like?
AI: The 23 mission all vary. For example, when attacking from the sea, you'll have to smash through the enemy's defences and secure a beachhead. You'll then have to reach the city centre, locate the enemy factory, seek the enemy commander's VT, destroy it and then collect an item. In another mission, you have to make it to the top of a mountain where the enemy is based. There's also a military dock where you have to engage with warships. Overall, if you put the maps together, the area it would cover comes to about 40-50 square kilometres.

XG: Is there any one feature you and the team are particularly proud of?
AI: The sense of unity between the controller and the VT's movement. This game is not a simple action game with a big controller. The mech's movements are designed to fit in with the those of the controller.

XG: Tell us about some of the game's weapons.
AI: Don't expect flashy, swirly missiles, although there will be spectacular heavy artillery. My favourite is the Cutter Boom, which isn't easy to use because it's a close-range, mêlée weapon. The most devastating is the Rail Gun. It's powerful, even at long range.

XG: Will battles involve any interaction from the non-player characters?
AI: Yes. At the start, you're told to follow the leader of a squad. Lag behind and the team progresses without you and completes the mission on its own. The following round, you're the commander so it's your job to order everyone about. You give and receive orders by tuning to the correct radio frequency of your comrades, issuing orders via a command menu. Additional items, such as weapons, can be obtained from another party, by tuning in to the appropriate frequency. Failure to establish communications will see you having a really hard time.

"WE HOPE THAT IT WILL BECOME PART OF VIDEOGAME HISTORY"

XG: Can you play without the special controller?
AI: No. You must have the controller to play this game—without it you'd lose the immersive experience.

XG: Why create a special controller?
AI: There are already several mech games on the market, so we wanted to make a game that would challenge what was available. We think the controller will add deep value to the gameplay—and hope that it will become part of videogame history.

XG: Aren't you worried the price of the device might put people off?
AI: *Steel Battalion* is for people who like mech games. We didn't want to compromise on the experience, so it's not really targeted at mass-market gamers.

XG: Tell us about the eject button. Is it true that if you use it, your hard disk is wiped and you lose everything you've accomplished in the game?
AI: If you press the Eject button, you lose your machine. But you can continue playing if you're fully supplied and have enough military achievements. Ejecting isn't something to be ashamed of. The important thing is to survive on the battlefield.

MONSTER MACHINE

This seductive black behemoth is heading straight for home, but is your lounge big enough to take it?

Due out in the UK later this year for a price tag around the £100 mark, the *Steel Battalion* controller is a lovingly created beast with more switches than your average space shuttle (or ambiguous sex toy, for that matter). In fact, with its 40 buttons in total, two joysticks, one lever, one dial and three pedals, it's probably the most ambitious controller ever conceived.

You won't be able to play *Steel Battalion*—an ultra-violent mech game crammed with enormous weaponry and destructible environments—without this special controller. Fine by us, because it's absolutely brilliant. Having a full dashboard of controls to play with sucks you deeper into the cockpit experience than a Black Hole-powered Dyson.

The screen is invaded form every side to narrow your field of view slightly and give you an even greater sense of being inside the metal monster. As rockets thud into the side of your vehicle, the screen flickers and you're compelled to wrestle the joysticks to prevent your vehicle tumbling onto its side like a beached whale. All the while, you'll be leaning in your seat as if you can shift you body weight for ballast....

BUTTON IT Many of the buttons will only be used once, but it's this very decadence which makes the controller so desirable. Why have one button to fire a weapon, change missiles and operate the horn when you can have three different ones, all begging to be pressed? And because the buttons have specific functions, it makes each one feel so much more like the real deal. You can almost see the wires connect the switch to the virtual wipers in front.

If it all looks a little confusing, don't panic—we've secured exclusive inside access to the blueprints for this giant controller slab and can reveal just what those buttons do...

PEDAL LO!

Just so your legs don't feel left out of the action, Capcom has released a pedal panel as well. It may look like a regular car setup, but the left and centre pedals are used to strafe in conjunction with one of the joysticks. The right pedal is the accelerator.

While the mechs you control are massive, they're also specially designed for manoeuvrability, so expect to shoot about at some impressive speeds.

It's a bit like driving the car from hell...

MECH MY DAY...

Steel Battalion the game is looking just as desirable as the controller. Painstaking video distortion filters add to the sense of cockpit intensity.

Metal twists and enemies crumble as you march on to victory. Just don't get your foot stuck in a pothole...

COMMUNICATION BUTTONS
Use these to issue urgent requests for more ammo or reinforcements. Could be life-savers.

FORECAST SHOOTING SYSTEM
Toggles an on-screen display, enabling you to see exactly where your missiles will hit, handy in a tight corner.

NIGHT SCOPE
Flicks you into night vision mode so you can operate with extreme prejudice under the cover of darkness.

AIMING LEVER
Use this to spin your vertical tank's torso, scoping the smoking horizon for your next victim.

MAIN WEAPON
The heart of the matter. Hit this trigger to blast off volleys of heavy machine gun fire, heat-seeking rockets and devastating area effect bombs—then savour the results.

EJECT-CMD
Ejects you from the mech. Fail to get out of there before your stranded behemoth is destroyed and your hard disk can be wiped of *Steel Battalion* saves! Hardcore or what?

WASHING
Yep, this button operates the windscreen wipers. Mightily handy when you're trying to target moving enemies and half a splattered corpse is slithering down your viewfinder.

CHAFF
Chucks out shards of metallic foil to draw enemy radar-guided missile fire.

FUNCTION KEYS
As yet, Capcom is keeping the purpose of these buttons secret. Perhaps they could fire off jets on upgraded mechs, providing a timely hover boost in tricky situations.

MAIN MONITOR ZOOM
Acts a bit like a sniper rifle sight, enabling you to pinpoint enemy weak points, such as fuel tanks and cockpits.

WHAT THE...?

Alright, so it isn't going to come cheap. The Japanese will get their hands on *Steel Battalion* (or *Tekki* when it's at home) in September. The game will be bundled with the controller for around £100. Hopefully it'll cost no more here when it arrives next year.

Think focus testing is something you do when you can't read CEEFAX from the sofa? Then Sean Dromgoole isn't going to give you a job...

- **Name** Sean Dromgoole
- **Age** 41
- **Job title** Market researcher (and director of Some Research)
- **Company** Some Research (a research agency)
- **Working on** Upcoming games for Sony and Eidos
- **Spare time** Pike fishing
- **Perks of the job** You get to meet some really bright, creative people

Being a market researcher is about Improving games and how publishers market them. Say we're focus testing a game that's halfway through development. It's my job to decide which sort of gamers to talk to, ask the right questions to find out what they want from the game, listen to what they have to say—the good and the bad—and then write the whole thing up. It's about getting at the truth in people's heads.

Big break Two senior executives at Sony saw some advertising research that I'd done and took me off into a quiet room. The conversation started with the immortal line: *"Are you a real gamer?"*

Best thing Watching people use the specialist research we do for them to make the game better. It's hard work and can take ages, but it is a nice feeling when you finally get your research analysis up together.

And the worst I have yet to feature in the credits for any of the 40 odd games I've worked on...

What's required The ability to listen to what people are saying, to think about it and to respond.

Last word This is boring but true—my company doesn't recruit the gamers we work with. We use a wholly separate agency. And they tell me that they have sufficient volunteers already. Sorry!

WORKING 9-5

RESEARCH ENGINE

SEAN'S TYPICAL DAY

10am

11am

5:15pm

6:00pm

7:30pm

9:00pm

XGAMER JOB CENTRE

WANTED: MARKET RESEARCHER

The successful applicant will show unfinished game code to groups of handpicked gamers. You will compare how the marketing department perceive the game ("It's an underwater racing game") with what real gamers think ("It's going to sink without a trace"). You will then be able to convince the marketing department that taking on board this information is a really good idea.

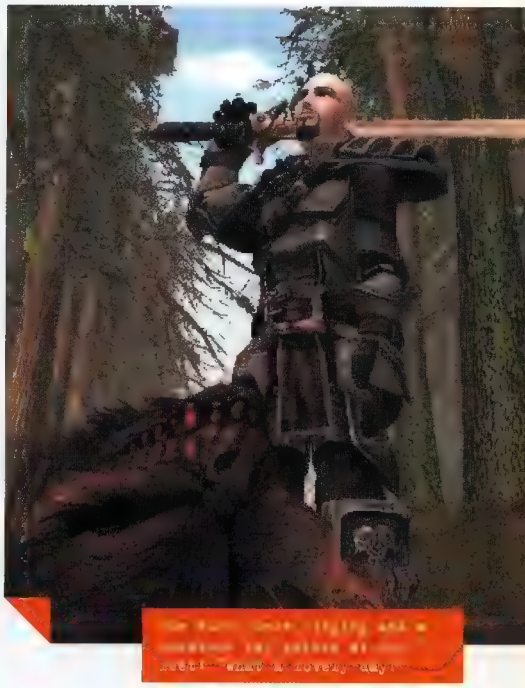
WOULD SUIT: Somebody who's interested in both marketing and what makes a game good or bad, but most of all you must be interested in finding out what other people think. Qualifications in marketing won't go amiss, but being a good listener is most important. Johnny Vaughan need not apply.

SALARY RANGE: £18,000 (recent graduate) to £45,000 (research director)

WHAT NEXT: Learn the dark arts. Beneath every marketing campaign—as seen in your local shops and on the ad pages in **XGamer**—there is a strategy. Learn to unpick what the marketing people are saying from what they want you to think. Look at the game and decide what its 'unique selling points' are. But don't dare utter this phrase in front of friends.

PART 08 > BIG BLUE BOX WEIGH UP CREATIVE FREEFALL VS SCHEDULE HELL.

THE MAKING OF PROJECT EGO



NAME> Dene and Simon Carter

JOB> Co-owners of Big Blue Box

"As a job, this really rates right up there with used condom recycling and being a male fluffer on triple-penetration porno"

Project Blue Box

At Big Blue Box, we take a certain amount of pride in what we think of as "creative chaos". We like to feel that the constant flow of ideas from the people who work here will cause the game to evolve into something fresh and original. It's an exciting experience, feeling that, at any moment, some whim of game design might whisk us off to hitherto unexplored territory.

Suffice to say, this sort of attitude is 100% guaranteed to scare both buttocks off any publisher. What's more, if we're being perfectly honest with ourselves, this sort of chaotic approach is no way to develop games these days. When you're spending millions of pounds and you've got 25 people whose livelihood depends on your game actually being finished, you've just got to be a little bit more structured in your approach. Simply put, a project without a plan is about as much use as a spam banjo.

And this is where scheduling steps in.

Anal flotsam

The very word sends shivers down our collective spines. To the layman, it probably doesn't sound like the most rank, evil, black-hearted piece of anal flotsam ever shat out by the Dark Lord himself but, trust us, it is. Most publishers today have very distinct views on the level of detail they want in project plans, and it can be an absolute nightmare.

To realise why, just think about what a detailed schedule can involve. Essentially, you take your period of development—say, two years. You turn that into days—roughly 520 of them. Then you break down your game design into the work that needs to be done: all the textures, meshes, levels, code, animations, sounds, etc. Then, and here's the fun bit, you take your 25 members of staff and try and predict what bit you're going to allocate each one, every day, for the next 520 days of development. What's more, every time you deviate from the plan (ie, every two weeks), you have to redo it all.

As a job, this really rates right up there with used condom recycling and being a male fluffer on triple-penetration porno. "Gianni," we'd say, fiddling uncomfortably with an oversized paper-clip, "the third Wednesday a year next April, you'll be working on 'old woman picking crops' animation. That is, if you haven't been driven utterly barking by our obviously doomed and futile attempts at preplanning and microscheduling every single teeny tiny task out of the millions that make up a decent game."

Crushed animator

Thankfully, life isn't quite like that for us. We're constantly grateful that our relationship with our publisher is such that we've so far managed to strike a decent balance between sensible planning and flexibility. On the one hand, we've got detailed enough plans to know what features of the game are going to be finished, and when, and on the other we can still get our creative juices pumping.

This sort of approach has a much better effect on the quality of a game than rigidly sticking to a predefined plan. The other week, for example, Dene came up with the idea of "boasting," where you can take your hero into the middle of town, and boast about how brilliantly you'll perform on your next quest. If you then finish the quest successfully, your fame throughout Albion will be boosted significantly. However, if you fail then you won't hear the last of it for ages. It's a nice little idea, one of hundreds that we've had for the game. If every time we came up with a cool idea like that, we had to sit down and plan out exactly which textures, sounds, animations, and so on, had to be implemented, by whom and exactly when, we'd soon stop coming up with cool ideas. Thankfully, that's not going to happen, and we now have more cool ideas than we could possibly implement in one title.

Interestingly, last week, one of our artists decided to get himself crushed underneath a washing machine, cracking three ribs, breaking both his hands and embedding his eyebrow piercing into his left temple; he definitely wasn't scheduled to do that.

NEXT MONTH > I DREAD TO THINK

WIN! A DIVINE SURROUND SOUND SYSTEM!

£1,100 WORTH OF AUDIO EXCELLENCE!

1ST PRIZE

'Fist Of God'

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Postcode ..... Email .....

Remove this form (or just copy it) from the page. Pack the bubbles with side-splitting funnies, then post or email your entry to the address on the right.

Tick da box if you would prefer **not** to receive info on other offers ☐

Readers Most Wanted Chart

While you're gurning at the stamp-glue, save yourself from repeating the grimness and tell us which games you're simply flooding your kegs to play...

1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....
5 .....

And, lo, on the second day after Josiah's father's niece came of age and married her brother's goat, God became bored and created Xbox. And he spake unto his people, "Let the very firmament shake with the thunder of digital surround sound!" And, lo again, the gamers of the land were well pleased.

And they raised their voices unto Him, and sang in prayer: "Oh Lord, your gift of Dolby 5.1 surround sound is truly a blessing." And God spake unto them once more: "I know. I'm good like that. But you'll have to buy your own surround sound systems. I'm not made of bloody alms, you know." And the people were less well pleased. But still grudgingly grateful. And so it was.

But the good samaritans of **XGamer** saw an injustice. So they ached and they toiled, and they provided for the people a wondrous competition. The first amongst prizes for this happy bestowment would be a miraculous Videologic Digitheatre DTS (**XGamer 05,** 9/10, RRP £500, reet tasty). While four runners-up would be blessed with a Videologic Digitheatre ZXR surround sound outfit (RRP £150).

To assist them, they enlisted the aid of Buffy, that great smiter of evil, to smite some evil. And, lo, Buffy extended the fist of the lord, and evil was grimly smote, and a picture was taken. Thy task, gentle reader, is to provide witty captions to this unholy scene, that the samaritans of **XGamer** might select winners for these wondrous prizes. So, goodly folk, tuck your entry 'neath the damask wing of a white dove, and launch it in the direction of:

The 'Fist Of God' Compo

XGamer Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW

Or, if you choose not to sully your hand with pen and parchment, access the shining electrical web-ulator, and email your entry (be sure to include all the other scripture from the form on the left) to:

xgamer@futurenet.co.uk

2ND PRIZE

Take advantage of *Halo*'s surround sound—there's nothing better than hearing the blistering crackle of automatic death shaking the windows...

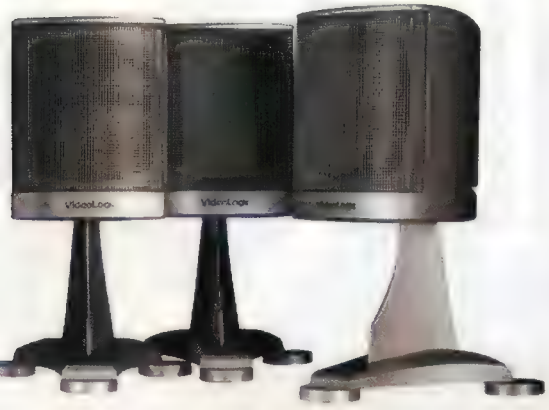
With all the subtlety of a tea-cup strapped to a T-rex's forehead, *Turok: Evolution*'s dino-toting gun mania is best served with a helping of 3D sonix.

And there's nothing quite as cosy in *Conflict: Desert Storm* as hearing your surroundings echo to the sound of ricocheting bullets and limb splatter.

- Closing date Thursday 19 September AD 2002
- Winners get their entries printed in issue 10, which descends from heaven to your local newsstands on 18 October.

The Rules...

No purchase of **XGamer** is necessary. The High Scribe's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. No employees of Future Publishing, or companies involved in the competition, or gods from lesser pantheons are permitted to enter. There is no cash alternative to prizes. No more than five entries per person. The consequences are dire. Six entries gets you six centuries twiddling your thumbs in purgatory. Seven entries nets you two millennia in hell, pushing a spiky rock up a never-ending hill. Eight or more entries gets you a personal visit from Beelzebub himself. Nobody wants that, least of all us. So be good, people.



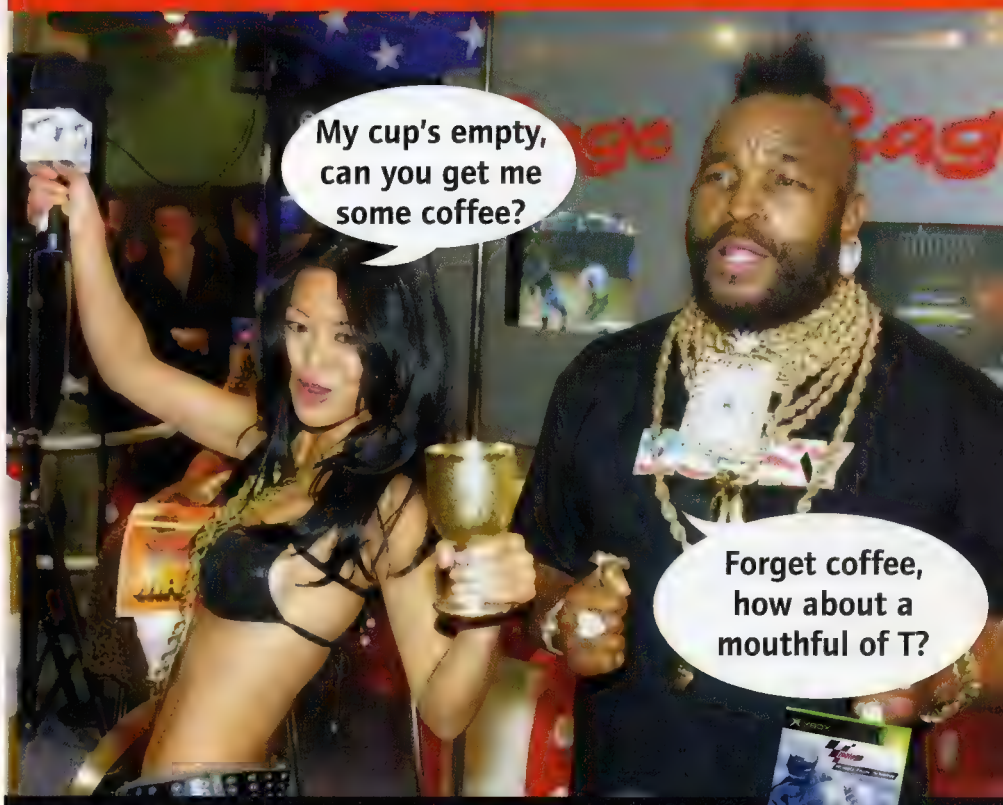
issue 05 caption compo the final winners...

"YOU CRAZY FOOL"

And they thought his career was all washed up. Which, ironically, is precisely what should be done with your potty-mouthed compo entries. We bring it on ourselves.

What have we done? How could we have been so blind? It all seemed so simple—Mr T and a fancy lady with a gold cup. What could possibly go wrong? But a few hundred "I ain't gettin' on no damn plane, fool!" captions later and the joke started wearing somewhat thin. It didn't help that BA Barracus looked like he had a bit of a clench on. Too many glasses of milk, p'raps. This led, somewhat inevitably, to a huge number of suggestions for using that goblet...

There were, however, several diamonds in the rough, ready to be plucked from the muck.



THE WINNER! Congratulations to Graham Egan of Norfolk for this smut-riddled masterpiece. Graham wins a 32" Panasonic telly from THQ, an Xbox and a copy of *Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology*.

Graham's caption tickled us like Mr Tickle, but there were plenty of aspiring *Private Eye* captioners out there who had us gagging on our bacon pasties and squirting tea out of our nasal flukes. Of course, such effort demands reward, so we'll be sending each of the following peeps a copy of the thundering ride that is *Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology*. So, in an order as inevitably random as a drunkard's text message, here they are...

Woman: "That's one heavy cup!"
Mr T: "Cup? That's one of my earrings!"
Pankhu Kaluba, Chelmsford

Mr T: "Hey, you wanna pull my chain?"
Woman: "Not likely, Tufty."
Bob Pipe, sunny Poole

Woman: "So what are you going to do with your trophy?"
Mr T: "I'm gonna make a tank out of it!"
Paul Clinch, Wigan

Mr T: "Yo! Get a load of my clubber!"
Woman: "Wow! It's so lang!"
Matt Beame, Aberdeenshire

Mr T: "You can have that cup if you go and crap on the Sony stand."
Woman: "Sorry, they've beaten me to it with their UK broadband package."
Brian Prangnall, Bognor Regis

Congratulations to the runners-up! Enjoy *Moto GP*—we did!

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF XGAMER

HITTING SHOPS FRIDAY SEP 20

Fulfil your needs for X Education for a nearly-free £3.20!

HALO 2 Another bellyful of hot-scoops and new-goss from the magazine that announced it in the first place—XGamer

PLUS!

SPIRITUALLY RELEASING REVIEWS

Timesplitters 2 ⊠ *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin* ⊠ *Colin McRae Rally 3* ⊠ *Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2* ⊠ *Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer* ⊠ *The Thing* ⊠ *Chase* ⊠ *WWE RAW* ⊠ *Silent Hill 2* ⊠ *Crazy Taxi 3* ⊠ *Blade 2* ⊠ *Lotus Challenge* ⊠ *Madden NFL 2003* ⊠ *Dead To Rights* ⊠ *Quantum Redshift* ⊠ And they're just the antipasti...

PREMIERSHIP WINNING PREVIEWS

Blinx: The Time Sweeper ⊠ *Splinter Cell* ⊠ *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon* ⊠ *Club Football* ⊠ *LMA Manager 2003* ⊠ *Flashpoint* ⊠ *Tony Hawk's 4* ⊠ *Yager* ⊠ *Lord Of The Rings* ⊠ *The Great Escape* ⊠ And for dessert...

WE ARE THE MODS!

People in the eastern hemisphere are baking all sorts of modification chips that when welded inside your Xbox are said to do all sorts of things. Potentially, you can play foreign games, DVDs and pirated software. Our technical fella, Zy Nicholson gets chip-clever as he explains all in the world of Xbox modifications. What the chips do, the legality of 'em and if your Xbox'll start crying if you mess up its innards.

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM SANDBLASTED

⊠ It's a cracker of a game that demands complete attention. It's also a bit hard, so make sure you see our stunning solutions and handy hintage.

FREE GUIDE BOOK TUROK EVOLUTION

⊠ Another game that pleased us somewhat, but it's harder than snapping a chicken's neck with your little toes. The FULL game, ripped to shreds.

ONLY IN NEXT MONTH'S XGAMER ON SALE SEP 20

Miss it, and everytime you flush the bog, it'll laugh.

Dear friendly, neighbourhood newsagent.

Please reserve me a copy of XGamer every month.

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Address _____

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Or, for a price-slashing subscription offer, turn to page 102.

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Made by Mr J Nash

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36% SHARPER GRAPHICS!

15% MORE SOUND!

28.5% RICHER HUES!

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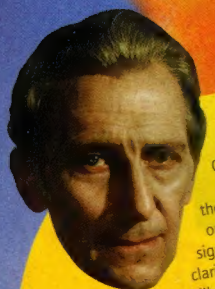

Hello! I'm films' Christopher Lee, and I thoroughly recommend the new Advanced Cable-X. Not only did my *Halo* score increase significantly thanks to the enhanced clarity of vision and super-deluxe extra sound, but my heating bills were cut in half and the pagan gods smiled favourably upon me—and all for less than the price of a big castle. So take a tip from me, films' Christopher Lee, and... Hang on, I'm films' Peter Cushing. Good lord. No wonder it took me ages this morning to find which cupboard I'd put my hat in. And who the heck did they bury in my coffin?

P.Cushing

...says FILMS' PETER CUSHING
(né FILMS' CHRISTOPHER LEE)

Aaarghh! No! Aieee! Sweet Jesus! Noooo!

Edward Woodward

...says TV's FAMOUS EDWARD WOODWARD

PETER CUSHING & EDWARD WOODWARD ©KOBAL

NEXT ISSUE OF XGAMER ON SALE FRIDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

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www.xbox.com/UK/amped

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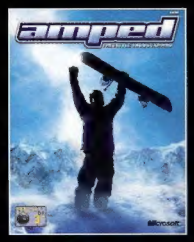

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trust me...

coming september 2002

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PlayStation®2

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